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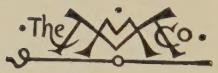
THE HISTORY OF EARLY ENGLISH LITERATURE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THE HISTORY

OF

EARLY ENGLISH LITERATURE

BEING THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO THE ACCESSION OF KING ÆLFRED

BY

STOPFORD A. BROOKE

Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn,
And to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

ISAIAH, li. 1

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PREFACE

This book is the history of the beginnings of English Poetry. It is the beginning also of a history of that poetry which, I hope, with perhaps too bold an ambition, to finish in the years to come. Life gives too short a time now for a long work, but it is a pleasure to have at least brought to an end this tale of the origins of English verse.

It begins in the older England over the sea. It ends with the accession of Ælfred. When he came to the throne in 871, literature, both Latin and English, had perished, after a career of two hundred years. The final home of both had been Northumbria. A few years after his accession the last unplundered seats of learning were destroyed. All the Muses were now silent. But before Ælfred died a new English literature had begun, and in a new land, and the King was himself its origin. What had been was poetry; this was prose. The country of English poetry had been Northumbria; the country of English prose was Wessex. At this date, then, the curtain naturally falls on the first act of this history. At this date, in the intervals of Ælfred's wars, it will naturally rise on the beginning of the second act.

The English literature of this period is entirely poetry, and this book is mainly dedicated to that poetry. I have not put aside the life of the people, the Latin literature, or the political history of England; but I have only spoken of them so far as they bore upon the poetry or illustrated it. That poetry is certainly not of a very fine quality, but it is frequently remarkable. It has its own special qualities, and with the ex-

ception of perhaps a few Welsh and Irish poems, it is the only vernacular poetry in Europe, outside of the classic tongues, which belongs to so early a time as the seventh and eighth centuries. The Welsh and Irish poems are few, problematical, and their range is limited; but the English poems are numerous, well authenticated, and of a wide and varied range. In these two centuries our forefathers produced examples, and good examples for the time, of religious, narrative, elegiac, descriptive, and even, in some sort, of epic poetry. This is a fact of singular interest. There is nothing like it — at this early period — elsewhere in Europe. But the interest is even greater when we consider this poetry in connection with the whole of English song. It will be seen that a great number of the main branches of the tree of English poetry had already opened out at this time from the stem, and that the ideal and sentimental elements of the earliest poetry have continued, with natural changes, up to the present day. Here, then, in the two hundred years between 670 and 870, the roots of English poetry, the roots of that vast over-shadowing tree, were set; and here its first branches clothed themselves with leaves. Here, like the oaks of Dodona, it began to discourse its music; and there is not a murmur now of song in all its immemorial boughs which does not echo from time to time with the themes and the passion of its first melodies. Here, too, we can best discern, and here isolate most easily, those elements in English character which, existing before the race was mixed, have been, not the cause of our poetry, but the cause why the poetry has been of so high an excellence, — that steady consistency of national character, that clinging through all difficulty to the aim in view, that unrelenting curiosity, that desire to better what has been done, which, though not art themselves, are the effectual powers which enable art to strive, to seek, and at last to reach its goal.

Moreover, no national art is good which is not plainly that nation's own. In this Anglo-Saxon poetry of which I write we grasp most clearly the dominant English essence. The

poetry of England has owed much to the different races which mingled with the original English race; it has owed much to the different types of poetry it absorbed — Greek, Latin, Welsh, French, Italian, Spanish — but below all these admixtures, the English nature wrought its steady will. It seized, it transmuted, it modified, it mastered these admixtures both of races and of song.

Of what kind the early English poetry is, what feelings inspired the poets, what imaginations filled their hearts, how did they shape their work — that is the vital, the interesting question; and to answer it, the poetry itself must be read. I have therefore not written much about the poems, but I have translated a great quantity of what seemed to me not only their best, but also their most characteristic passages. I have also, when they were short enough, translated whole poems like the fourth *Riddle* and the *Wanderer*.

How to translate them was my chief difficulty. It was necessary, above all, that the translation should be accurate, but it was also necessary that it should have, as far as possible, the rhythmical movement of verse. Of all possible translations of poetry, a merely prose translation is the most inaccurate.

The translations here given are as accurate as I could make them. I do not mean that there are no mistakes in them, — which would be an insolence I should soon repent, — but I mean that there is nothing out of my own fancy added to the translation. The original has been rigidly followed, and, for the most part, line for line. I have nearly always bracketed inserted words; and the only licence I have taken is the introduction of such words as *then* and *there* and *all*, when I needed an additional syllable for the sake of the rhythm which I adopted. Permission to do this was, I may say, given to me by the Anglo-Saxon poets themselves; it is their constant habit.

Then I felt that the translation should be in a rhythm which should represent, as closely as I could make it, the movement and the variety of the original verse. A prose translation, even when it reaches excellence, gives no idea whatever

of that to which the ancient English listened. The original form is destroyed, and with it our imagination of the world to which the poet sang, of the way he thought, of how he shaped his emotion. Prose no more represents poetry than architecture does music. Translations of poetry are never much good, but at least they should always endeavour to have the musical movement of poetry, and to obey the laws of the verse they translate.

A translation made in any one of our existing rhyming metres seemed to me as much out of the question as a prose translation. None of these metres resemble those of Anglo-Saxon poetry; and, moreover, their associations would modernise the old English thought. An Anglo-Saxon king in modern Court dress would not look more odd and miserable than an Anglo-Saxon poem in a modern rhyming metre. Blank verse is another matter. It frequently comes near to the "short epic line" of Cynewulf, but it fails in the elasticity which a translation of Anglo-Saxon poetry requires, and in itself is too stately, even in its feminine dramatic forms, to represent the cantering movement of old English verse. Moreover, it is weighted with the sound of Shakspere, Milton, or Tennyson, and this association takes the reader away from the atmosphere of early English poetry. I felt myself then driven to invent a rhythmical movement which would enable me, while translating literally, to follow the changes, and to express, with some little approach to truth, the proper ebb and flow of Anglo-Saxon verse.

The Anglo-Saxon line is divided into two halves by a pause. The first half has two "measures," and the first syllable of these is accented, or "stressed." The second half has the same number of measures and accents. The binding together of these two halves is done by alliteration. Generally speaking, the two accented syllables in the first half and one of the accented syllables in the second half begin with the same consonant or with any vowels; almost always with different vowels. Frequently, however, there is only one alliterated syllable in

the first half of the line. Unaccented syllables, the greater number of which were placed at the beginning of the second half line, after the pause, filled up the line. One school of poets, of whom Cynewulf was the chief, used a short line, with few slurred syllables. Another school which has been called the Caedmonian School used a line with a varying number of unaccented syllables, and as a great number of these were often inserted, the line has been called the "long epic line" in contrast with Cynewulf's shorter line. A poet of this school could use the shorter line when he pleased. He might have a line of only eight syllables, or one of three times that length, expanding it to express his swelling passion, or contracting it to suit a sharp question or a concise description. The variety then of the line was great, and its elasticity. It was capable of rapidity and solemnity; and its harmony and order were secured by the last alliterated stress being on the first syllable of the last word but one of the full line.

In order to be able to fulfil these needs and follow these peculiarities, I chose, after many experiments, the trochaic movement used in this book, each half-line consisting of trochees following one another, with a syllable at the end, chiefly a long one, to mark the division of the line. I varied the line as much as I could, introducing, often rashly, metrical changes; for the fault of this movement is its monotony. I have sometimes tried an iambic movement, but rarely; for this trochaic line with a beat at the end of each half-verse seemed to me to get the nearest to the sound of the Anglo-Saxon line, even though it is frequently un-similar to that line itself. I used alliteration whenever I could, and stressed as much as possible the alliterated words, and I changed the length of the line with the changes of the original. But when I could not easily alliterate my line or stress the alliterated word, I did not try to do so. It was better, I thought, to give literally the sense and the sentiment of the original than to strain them or lose them by a rigid adherence to alliteration and accent. I have made clear the division of the

Anglo-Saxon line by leaving a space in the midst of each line of my translation. The two half-lines are, of course, intended to be read right across the page, with a slight pause upon the space between them. I think the method used is on the whole the right method, but I am by no means satisfied with what I have done. I submit it with much deference to those who understand the difficulties of such a translation.

This book is written from the literary point of view, and desires, above all, to induce English-speaking folk to reverence, admire, and love the poetry which their fathers wrote in old time, since it is worthy. I have not therefore, except when I thought it necessary, entered into the critical or scientific questions which hum like bees around the poems. On these questions a great number of books, reviews, and pamphlets have been written. I have not avoided this side of the matter from any want of gratitude to the critics, or from any lack of appreciation of the work of Anglo-Saxon scholars. On the contrary, it is my duty and my pleasure to acknowledge, that were it not for the intimate and exhaustive labour of German, English, and American scholars, a book like this, which views the poetry of the ancient English only as literature, could not have been written at all, or, at least, not on any sure foundation. No translation worth reading, or giving a clear representation of what the Anglo-Saxon poets thought or felt, could have here been made, had it not been preceded by the long, careful and penetrating labour of the philologists; nor could any just literary estimate of the poems or any useful arrangement of them have been worked out in this book, without the minute and accurate toil expended on them, and on their subjects, sources and dates by a multitude of critics among whom the Germans are pre-eminent. Moreover, had it not been for the labour and genius of the later historians of early England, especially of Mr. Green, I could not have had the materials for binding up, as I have tried to do, the poetry of England with the history of England.

I cannot, so numerous are they, mention the many scholars

to whom my thanks are due, but my gratitude to them is none the less. Where I have specially used the work of any one of them I have acknowledged it in the text. Two, however, above all, ought to be thanked by me, as they have been thanked by all who have cared for ancient English poetry. Professor Grein is gone from us, but he will never be forgotten. To his *Dictionary* I owe my first interest in the Anglo-Saxon language, my first understanding of its power and charm. To his translation of the poems into German I owe my first appreciation of the poetry of early England. The reading of that translation made me eager to read the poems in the original, and I could not rest till I was able to do so. When I had read them I could not rest till I had written this book. The other scholar to whom this book owes so much is Professor Wülker. He needs no praise, but he may take gratitude from me. Had it not been for his *Grundriss zur Geschichte der angelsächsischen Litteratur*, one like myself, who late in life began to read the Anglo-Saxon literature, could never have found his way through the tangled mazes of Anglo-Saxon criticism, nor known what to look for, nor where to find his wants fulfilled. I cannot understand why the University Professors of Anglo-Saxon in this country do not have that book translated, and edited up to date.

I was fortunate enough while these pages were passing through the press to be in time to see Professor Earle's book, *The Deeds of Beowulf*, and though I do not agree with his theory of the origin of the poem, I wish to thank him for having, by his translation and notes, made *Beowulf* a more literary possession for the English people. I have also to thank Mr. Gollancz for permitting me to use the early proof sheets of his edition of the *Christ*. I saw these sheets after I had made the translations of the *Christ* contained in this book, and before he had re-written his translation as it now appears. I made some changes in my translation and adopted some of his phrases. I also adopted his new division of the poem, and his ending of it at line 1663. Since then his book has been published, and

my personal thanks are now mingled with those due to him from all who care for English literature. To Miss Kate Warren, an accomplished student of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and an excellent teacher of our modern literature, I am also indebted for steady and valuable help frankly given to me throughout the writing of this book. She made the map which accompanies these volumes, and the Index is also her work. I have had the map drawn to illustrate the chapter which treats of the question — Why Northumbria was the special home of English Poetry. It represents the general relation of the English kingdoms to the Welsh, Irish and Pictish peoples, and it follows, in its main divisions, the map at p. 21 of Mr. York Powell's *History of England*. It does not pretend to give the boundaries between the several English kingdoms or between the English and the Welsh at any particular period from 600 to 800. Maps which explain the to-and-fro of those boundaries from time to time will be found in Mr. Green's *Making of England*. I have also had placed in this map, and underlined in red, the names of the most famous monastic centres of learning which had been set up before the death of Baeda.

And so, I bid this book farewell. It has tried, with many others, to save for remembrance and seclude for thought the neglected lands of early English poetry. Like the ancient places of this country where our forefathers met together for religion or war or council, they seem to appeal to England to take care of them, to give them interest and affection. Far too few of them remain, far too many of them have perished. The silent stream of time, with mordant and quiet wave, washed into forgetfulness those pleasant fields,

> rura quae Liris quieta
> mordet aqua taciturnus amnis.

STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

August 2, 1892.

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The Exeter Book formed part of the library which Leofric, the first bishop of Exeter, collected and left to his cathedral church. He catalogued it himself as a *Mycel Englisc boc be gehwilcum þingum on leoðwisan geworht:* "A mickle English book on all kinds of things wrought in verse." It is still kept in Exeter Cathedral, and has been there, since Leofric died in 1071, for 821 years. It is a varied anthology, and contains poems which range from the eighth to the tenth or eleventh century. One or two may belong to the seventh century, and some may be of even higher antiquity. *Widsith*, for example, may contain verses which were made in the old Angle land over the seas. Of the poems mentioned in these volumes, it holds, and I give them in the order they are in the *Book: The Christ*, *Guthlac*, *Azarias*, *The Phœnix*, *Juliana*, *The Wanderer*, *Gifts of Men*, *The Seafarer*, *Widsith*, *Fates of Men*, *Gnomic Verses*, *The Panther*, *Whale and Partridge*, *The Soul to its Body*, *Deor*, *Riddles* 1–60, *The Wife's Complaint*, *The Descent into Hell*, *Riddle* 61, *The Message of a Lover*, *The Ruin*, *Riddles* 62–89. Others, either of little value or later than the eighth century, are also contained in it.

The Vercelli Book was discovered in the capitular library at Vercelli in Upper Italy by Dr. Blum in the year 1832. No one knows how it got there, but Wülker conjectures that a Hospice existed in that town for Anglo-Saxon pilgrims who went on pilgrimage to Rome, and who crossed by the Mont Cenis or the Great or Little St. Bernard Passes. A scanty library may have grown up there, and this manuscript have been left to it by some English voyager. The book is a volume of Anglo-Saxon homilies, but interspersed among them are six poems — *The Andreas*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, *The Address of the Soul to the Body*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Elene*. The last is a fragment on the *Falsehood of Men*. The handwriting is of the eleventh century.

The Manuscript of Beowulf is in the British Museum (Cotton Vitellius A. xv.), and the same MS. contains the poem of *Judith*.

The Junian Manuscript, of the Caedmonian poems. — It contains *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, *Christ and Satan*, and is in the Bodleian.

Two fragments. — (i.) *The Fight at Finnsburg.* It only exists in a copy of it made by Hickes from a leaf of parchment used in the binding of a manuscript of homilies. This leaf, found in Lambeth Palace Library, is now lost. (ii.) Two vellum leaves found by Professor Werlauff in the National Library at Copenhagen contain two fragments of a poem to which the name of *Waldhere* has been given.

CHAPTER I

WIDSITH, DEOR, AND THE SCÔP

"WIDSITH told his tale, unlocked his word-hoard," is the beginning of the earliest poem we possess in the English tongue. *Widsith* — that is, "the Far-Traveller" — may be the actual name of the writer, or a name which as a wandering poet he assumed; or, as it occurs only in the introduction, which was probably written much later than the body of the poem, it may be a title given to the poet by the writer of the introduction, and this seems the best explanation of the term. The suggestion that it is another name for Woden, and that Widsith is therefore a mythological person, does not seem to have sufficient ground for its adoption. He is rather the "poetic representative of the singer" who loved to wander from court to court and land to land; and his name, whether assumed by himself or given to him by an after-writer, expresses this very well.

The poem begins with an introduction of nine lines. This is followed by a catalogue, from the tenth to the seventy-fifth line, of the various places and kings and tribes that Widsith had visited. An interpolation then of twelve lines succeeds, and may have been inserted in the seventh century, and in England. The conclusion contains a personal account of the poet's way of living and of his last journey, and this runs on from verse 87 to the close.[1] The catalogue and the personal account are very old, older than anything else we have of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and may date from the time when the English as yet kept their seats upon the continent. The theories concerning the origin and date of the poem are numerous, and I place in a note at the end of this volume a short discussion of them. To treat of them here would confuse the personal impression which the poem was certainly intended to make.

[1] Verses 131–134 are, it is supposed, a later interpolation.

The Preface (lines 1–9) which may have been written in the old Angle-land, tells us that Widsith, "who most of all men visited kindreds and nations, received in the hall for his singing memorable gifts." Born among the Myrgings,[1] he became the singer of the court, and while still young went, in this capacity, "with Queen Ealdhild the weaver of peace," the daughter of Eadwine and the wife of Eadgils King of the Myrgings, to seek the home of Eormanric (Hermanric), King of the Ostrogoths, who lived "east from Ongle"; and this was his first journey.

Here the Introduction ceases, and at the 10th line Widsith himself, writing in his old age, describes his journeys.[2] "Many men and rulers I have known," he says; "through many stranger-lands I have fared, throughout the spacious earth, parted from my kinsmen. Therefore I may sing in the mead-hall how the high born gave me gifts." Two among the rest were most gracious to him, Guthere the Burgundian, "who gave me an arm-ring, no sluggish king was he, and Ælfwine[3] in Italy, Eadwine's bairn. He was of all men swiftest of hand in winning of honour, and freest of heart in the dealing of rings."

These names occur in the long list of kings and tribes whom he visited — a list which has certainly undergone some later interpolations. Many of the ancient names belong to the North German cycle of romance. A special place is given to Offa of Ongle. We hear also of personages known to us from the poem of *Beowulf*, of Finn, and Hnaef, of Hrothgar, Ingeld, and of the town of Heorot. It is a list of great importance for the history of the ancient tribes of Germany and for the heroic sagas of that country, but it has no literary value, and no personal interest. The personal interest comes in at line 87, after an interpolation of twelve lines. Widsith tells of his voyage to Eormanric, of his return, of the welcome his lord gave him, and of the songs he sung at home with his brother bard Scil-

[1] The Myrgings, the dwellers near the *mark*, lived perhaps in the Elbe-land between the Elbe and the Eyder, and were neighbours of the Angles.

[2] I assume here, for literary purposes, that the poem was written by one man, and that it is a personal account of his wanderings. In that way we can see the thing as Ælfred saw it, and it is the first way in which we should look at it. The critical consideration of its genuineness comes in afterwards, and will be found in a note at the end of this volume.

[3] On the supposition that this list is the genuine work of Widsith, that is, of a poet who in his early youth, visited Hermanric, this "Ælfwine in Italy" cannot be Alboin, but, as Guest conjectures, some Chief fighting in Italy, probably during the inroad of Alaric and under his banner, in the beginning of the fifth century. If that explanation be rejected, the name Ælfwine, *unless* we advance the date of the poem to the seventh century, must have been interpolated, for Alboin died in 572, two hundred years later than the death of Hermanric (375) whom Widsith says he visited in his youth.

ling. The little tale is so simple, so direct, and so full of the detail of memory, that here if anywhere we seem to get to the genuine matter.

For a longish time lived I with Eormanric;
There the King of Gotens with his gifts was good to me;
He, the Prince of burg-indwellers, gave to me an armlet.
On the which 600 scats of beaten gold
Scorèd were, in scillings reckoned.[1]
This I gave to Eadgils, to my lord who guarded me —
When I homeward came — for his own possession,
For my Master's meed, Lord of Myrgings he —
Since he granted land to me, homeland of my fathers.

And another gift Ealdhild gave to me,
Folk queen of the doughty men, daughter of Eadwine.
Over many lands I prolonged her praise,
When so e'er in singing I must say to men
Where beneath the sky I had known the best
Of all gold-embroidered queens giving lavishly her gifts.
Scilling then and with him I, in a voicing clear,
Lifted up the lay to our lord the conqueror;
Loudly at the harping lilted high our voice.
Then our hearers many, haughty of their heart,
They that couth it well, clearly said in words
That a better lay listed had they never.

The poem now represents his further wanderings among the Gothic tribes that, one after another, fought and began to settle in the provinces of Italy; and again, when he grew older, his visits to the Gothic princes while they were still fighting with the Huns in the dark woods about the Vistula. "Often was battle fierce," he sings, "when with hard swords the host of the Hreads had to guard the old fatherland against the bands of Ætla (Attila) all about the Wistla Wood." He names many of the warriors with whom he companied, and in whose camps he sang, but most "Wudga and Hama" (both of whom become personages in the hero sagas), "not the worst of my friends, though I name them the last." Then in four lines he sketches that long and dreadful war which the East Goten waged with the Huns, and so great is the power, even of poor poetry, that we see, as if they were alive, Wudga and Hama whirling the spear for wife and child in Wistla Wood.

[1] The portions of a *beág*, outlined on the gold, would be called *scillings;* when these were adjusted to a fixed scale upon the weight of the *solidus*, the scilling would become (1) a definite division of a ring, (2) a division equal in weight to a *solidus*, and this is the meaning here; but see, for the whole matter, *English Coins*, British Museum.

Oft from their hosting hurtling through air
Midst the fierce folk flew the spear yelling.
Exiles, they ruled o'er their women, their men;
Gold-wreathen warriors, Wudga and Hama.

Then, leaving out verses 131–134, which are an interpolation, the Traveller ends his verses by a description of the wandering singer and of the glory of his art. Thus, drifting on, the gleemen rove through many lands —

Say (in song) their need, speak aloud their thankword!
Always South or Northward some one they encounter,
Who, — for he is learned in lays, lavish in his giving —
Would before his men of might magnify his sway,
Manifest his earlship.
Till all flits away —
Life and light together — laud who getteth so
Hath beneath the heaven high established power.

The poem has but little literary value, but a certain literary charm is diffused over it by the names it enshrines — names of men concerning whom great sagas were written, and whose gests and government made a noise which filled the ear of the world. If the writer really saw Hermanric and Attila before they became heroes of Teutonic saga, we transfer to him and to his poem our pleasure in their cycle of stories. The very possibility that he saw these men excites us. Moreover, if we consider the poem to be of the fifth century, the light of four cycles of lays is reflected backwards upon it. Its names bring before us the sagas of Hermanric, of Alboin, of Gudrun, and Beowulf; the story of Offa, and of the fight at Finnsburg. We may be said to be present at the birth and to watch over the cradle of these great Teutonic sagas. Even if the poem be of the seventh century, and these sagas are behind it and not before it, this reflected literary charm is still present. All the great figures rise before our eyes as we read their names in the dry detail of the catalogue. We may also bind it up with another fancy for which we have a good foundation. We may fairly imagine the delight of Ælfred when he read this poem. The catalogue of tribes and kings, the geographical details it contains would fall in with the temper of the king who translated and added to Orosius, who wrote down from Ohthere's and Wulfstan's lips their voyages to the North Sea, and to the mouth of the Vistula. Moreover, the passion for roving, for adventure, which is keen above all other nations in the people of our island, makes this poem representative of the English.

Widsith is our Ulysses. "I have fared through many stranger lands, through the spacious earth; good and evil have I known." It is the true description of a common type of Englishman in every period of our history. Nor is Widsith's pleasure in his art or his practical pleasure in the receipt of gifts, less characteristic of the English. But the gifts are little in comparison with his joy in his work, and his reverence for it. Even great kings are but little, he thinks, without their singer. In his hands their history lies, and their honour. Horace did not feel more strongly the need of a sacred bard to chronicle great actions than did the earliest of English poets.

The poem is then not only the story of wanderings, it also sketches the life and the repute of the Scôp — the name given to the singer and poet who was retained in the court of a king or the hall of a great noble. He was frequently one of the thegns, and received money and landright from the king. He may have been, if not a thegn, on an equality with them; and was often, as we see in *Beowulf*,[1] a renowned captain. Sometimes, like Widsith, or perhaps like Cynewulf at one period of his life, he took to roving, and singing from court to court. In this fashion he became the travelling geographer and historian, the bringer of news, the man who, by singing the great deeds of warriors in various lands, knit together by a common bond of admiration the heroes of diverse peoples, and made the great stories the common property of the Teutonic tribes.

As *Widsith* is the picture of the poet in his happiness, singing his life in a lyrical fashion, (it has been attempted to arrange the poem in strophes), so the *Lament of Deor* images the Scôp in his sorrow. This song is much later, I think, than *Widsith*. It belongs to a time when the Gothic cycle of lays had at least well begun. Hermanric has become legendary. Theodric has become the fabulous hero. But the prominence of the story of Weland, and the mention of Geat, localise the poem among the Northern Teutonic tribes. From these it was brought to England, perhaps by some belated Angles, if Sweet be right in his conjecture that it may have been composed before the English migration. I think it is likely to be much later, and to have been made in England — it is put by some as far on as the eighth century, — but no decision can be come to on the matter. Its form is remarkable. It has a refrain, and there is no other early English instance of this known to us. It is written in

[1] Beowulf is the name of a poem, and of the hero whose deeds are sung in the poem. Whenever I mention the poem, I print its name in italics, and whenever the hero is meant, his name is in ordinary type.

strophes, and Sweet thinks that it may be a solitary remnant of a number of English strophic lays which belonged to the same class as some of the old Scandinavian lays which were rudely strophic.[1] One motive, constant throughout, is expressed in the refrain. This dominant cry of passion makes the poem a true lyric, and we ought to look upon it with pleasure, for it is the Father of all English lyrics.

Deor is not like Widsith, a treasure-gifted singer, always in favour of his lord. Like the *Wanderer* who looks back with mourning on the time when he was his master's favourite, he has been deprived of his rewards and lands, and has seen a rival set above his head. It is this whirling down of Fortune's wheel that he mourns in his song, and he compares his fate to that of others who have suffered, so that he may have some comfort. But the comfort is stern like that the Northmen take. Others, he thinks, have gone through great griefs, and come out on the other side of them — so also may he win through his pain.

Here is the song, and the legendary woes of which he speaks show that the English knew the story of Weland well, the story of Geat, of Hermanric, of Theodric, and the tale which became in after years the saga of Gudrun —

Weland for a woman[2] knew too well exile!
Strong of soul that earl, sorrow sharp he bore;
To companionship he had care and weary longing,
Winter-freezing wretchedness. Woe he found again, again,
After that Nithhàd in a Need had laid him —
Staggering sinew-wounds — sorrow-smitten man!
That he overwent; *this* also may I.

Not to Beadohild was her brothers' death
On her soul so sore as was her self-sorrow,
When that she was sure, with a surety far too great,
That with child she was. Never could she think,
With a clear remembrance, how that came to be
That she overwent; *this* also may I.

Of this meed of Hild we've from many heard;
. . . . . .
And so bottomless was the passion Geàt felt,

[1] German critics have rearranged the first four strophes, and put strophe 4 into the place of strophe 3. The order will then be harmonious. A strophe of six lines will be followed by one of five, twice over; but I think Müllenhof gave up this needless change.

[2] There are many readings of this obscure line. As to Weland, Hild, and Geat, a note at the end of the volume treats of them.

That Love-sorrow stole all his sleep away!
That he overwent; *this* also may I.

For a thirty winters did Theodric fast
Hold the Maerings' burg. Many knew of that.
That he overwent; *this* also may I.

We in songs have heard of the wolfish thought
That Eormanric had! Far he owned the folk
Of the Gotens' realm. Grisly was that king.
Many a warrior sat, with his sorrows cloaked,
Woe within his waiting! Wistfully he longed
That the kingdom's king[1] overcome should be!
That he overwent; *this* also may I.

I omit here what seems a Christian interpolation of the ordinary gnomic character. We may, however, give thanks to it, for I suspect we owe the preservation of this lyric to the zeal of the interpolator who saw in the sadness of Deor an opportunity for introducing his gentle phrases on the vanity of life and the mercy of God. The rest is Deor's own. The Heorrenda who conquered Deor may be the Horant of the Gudrun saga of whom it is said that he bound all men with his song, that the beasts who listened to him ceased to graze in the woods, and the worms and fishes forgot their daily work in his singing. "Now," he says, "I will say concerning myself"

Whilom was I Scôp of the Heodenings:
Dear unto my Lord! *Deor* was my name.
Well my service was to me many winters through;
Loving was my Lord; till at last Heorrenda, —
Skilled in song the man! — seized upon my land-right
That the guard of earls granted erst to me.
That one overwent; *this* also may I.

With this song begins and ends the Old English lyric. We have in Anglo-Saxon a few elegiac poems of fine quality, but the true lyric — short, at unity with one thought, with one cry of joyful or sorrowful passion — does not occur again till long after the Conquest.

We have yet another sketch of the Scôp which we may well set beside the sketches in *Widsith* and in *Deor*, though it belongs to a later time in Anglo-Saxon literature. It is the eighty-ninth riddle of Cynewulf which Dietrich has happily solved as the Wandering Singer —

[1] I have introduced *king* into the text.

Ætheling am I, and to earls am known ;
And not rarely do I rest with the rich and with the poor ;
Midst the Folks I'm famous. Widely fares (through hall) —
And for me a foreigner,[1] rather than for friends —
Loud the plunderers' applause, if that I should have
Glory in the Burgs or the goods that shine.
Also very great the love that well-witted men
Have of meeting me. I to many folk
Wisdom do unveil. Not a word on earth
Then is said by any man. Though the sons of men,
Though the Earth-indwellers, eagerly seek after
Footprints that I leave, frequently I hide,
From all men that are, my (unfollowed) way.

If this riddle be by Cynewulf, as I think it is, he sketches in it his own position and temperament, and with that, the position and temperament of the Scôp. He was not only ennobled and at home with the rich, but also sang with the poor and stayed in their houses. He loved to win gifts and rings, and to excite the warriors who roved for plunder; but he sang a different kind of song to the elder and wiser men. And we may judge from all that is left to us that these songs of "wisdom" were the great sagas like *Beowulf*, tales of law and justice and noble war; sometimes riddles and gnomic verses fitted for well-witted men; even songs of history like that of *Widsith;* and, when he had so sung, all men sat silent, listening. Moreover, he was eagerly sought after, but it was often his habit, like many of his clan, to hide himself in solitude, musing like his fellow in *Beowulf* on new poems; or indulging the melancholy found in the *Lament of Deor*, and which lay deep in the temperament of Cynewulf. Of this there is ample proof at the end of the *Elene*. In that poem Cynewulf sketches his early life as a poet. Once he received treasures and appled gold, — once his youth was swift and happy, but now all joy was fled away, and sore had been his trouble. But at last, when he seemed to have lost the art of weaving words, God "unbound his breast, unlocked the craft of song, and again he practised with delight his versing." Cynewulf had been then a Scôp attached to a court, and also a wandering singer. He had had his pleasure and also his pain — had been Widsith and Deor in one.

When, however, we meet with the *wandering* Scôp we meet with that which is not usual. His place was, generally, like

[1] The passage is most difficult. It means, according to my translation — and I read *frendum* instead of *fremdes* — that the warriors enjoy the singing of a stranger, since he is new to them, more than the singing of their own bards.

Deor's, a fixed place, with an appointment of food and money or land which attached him to the court of the chieftain or king. When he wandered, it was either from a roving spirit, or as an attendant on an embassage, like Widsith, or because misfortune had befallen his lord, like the "Wanderer," or because, like Deor, he was dispossessed by a rival.

Below the Scôp there were a great number of inferior singers who made it their business to go from place to place, to whom the name of Scôp was not given — who did not shape, but sang that which had been shapen by the Scôp. These were the gleemen, though their name is sometimes given to the Scôp — and in later Anglo-Saxon times, they were not unfrequently accompanied by jugglers, tumblers, and wrestlers. These two — the Scôp and the gleeman — were professional persons, but they were not the only singers. Almost every one made verses or sang them. Heroes in the midst of battle sang as they advanced, like Harold Hardrada at Stamford Bridge; Vikings, as they drave their ships through the gale or stormed a town on the river, shouted their hymn of defiance to the sea, or their praises of their ship, or the battle-stroke of the moment. Warriors chanted their deeds of the day in the hall or the camp at night, as Woden's chosen did in Valhalla. The old chiefs sang the glory of their youth. Their very swords and spears were thought to sing. The spear yells, the sword shouts in battle. Then, the wanderer who came into the hall to claim hospitality sang his stave of thanks, or versed for the chief in the high seat, who he was. The king himself often broke in with his tale, and seized the harp as Hrothgar did in Heorot. Even the preachers afterwards, like Ealdhelm, sang ancient songs in the public ways to draw the people round them. In the women's chambers, also, the old lays were sung. Ælfred, we are told, sang the ballads of his people at his mother's knee. At the feasts of the commoner folk it was the same as in the noble's hall. Freedmen, peasants, even the serfs, sent round the harp, (as we hear from the Caedmon story in Baeda), telling, as Greek and Roman did, alternate tales. The player beat the harp in time with the thoughts and images of his song; his voice rang out the alliterated words and the accented syllables of the verses. Gesture accompanied and exalted the things described. The listeners often joined in, moved to excitement, and a whole chorus of voices filled the hall, the monastery, or the farm-building.

As the practice of the art was widely spread, so was it greatly honoured. The very name of Scôp, like the independent word

Poet, brought the minds of those that heard it back to the Shaper of the universe, who himself gave the art of song. Saga was Odin's daughter among the Northmen. The view of the Greeks, of Homer, that the minstrel's inspiration and invention were divinely given, was held by our English forefathers. We are told in Baeda's story of the poet Caedmon that all men held his gift to be divinely given him of the Lord. Cynewulf, as I have quoted above, says that "God unlocked his breast and gave him back the power of song." In the *Gnomic Verses* this opinion is combined with the thought that the poet is less troubled with selfish and tormenting thought than other men, because he has so many human things to think of. "To all men," the versifier says, "wise words are becoming; a song to the gleemen and wisdom to men. As many as men are on the earth, so many are their thoughts; each to himself has a separate soul. So, then, he who knows many songs and can greet the harp with his hands, hath the less of vain longing, for he hath in himself his gift of joy which God gave to him." The joyousness of the gift is expressed by many words. Song and music are almost synonymous with *gleo* and *wynn* and *dream*, with glee and delight and joy. The lay is in *Beowulf* the *healgamen*, the rapture of the hall. The harp is the wood of social joy, the wood-beam of delight. Playing and singing are — "to awake the joyous wood, the rapture of the harp, to rouse the happy lay," to practise the "glee-craft," to have the "jocund gift of poesy." Wisdom and prophecy are by other words connected with song and poetry.

When we travel as far back as we can go with certainty — to the times when literary men in Rome discussed the *Germania*, we find the Teutonic tribes harpists and singers of verse. "They are a fair-haired folk," says Tacitus, "blue-eyed, strongly built," and he tells of their love of song. "They celebrate, in ancient lays, Tuisco, their earth-born god, (that is, whom the Germans thought to have sprung out of the earth where they dwelt, so long was it since they had settled there), and Mannus his son, the forefathers and founders of their race." "Their legends say that Hercules had been among them, and they call on his name above all others in their war-songs when they march to battle." Other battle hymns were accompanied by the loud beating of the spears of the host against their shields, or by the roaring sound the warriors made when they laid their lips to the upper rim of the shield and hummed into it and over it. With this music they kindled themselves to battle, and according to its tone they foretold

the issue of the fight. In the *Annals*, we hear of the larger type of poetry, of the beginnings of the sagas. They have songs, Tacitus writes, in honour of their deliverer Arminius;[1] there are other pieces also which they sing in their bivouacs and at their feasts.

All this music and verse was, as we see, already old in the time of Tacitus, and belonged to religion and to war — a music of solemn ceremonies, sorrowful or festival. "Of all ceremonies, going into battle was the most religious," save perhaps that other great ceremony which was always attended by songs — the burial of a king or hero, an instance of which we have in the closing lines of *Beowulf*.

For 1900 years, then, we know that the English race has been a singing folk, and though we are not alone in that characteristic, we are almost alone in this, that we possess in our own language products of that singing temper in poems like those of *Widsith* and *The Fight at Finnsburg* which may range from the fifth to the seventh century. Moreover, there are lays imbedded in the *Beowulf* which seem to go back to a still more remote antiquity.

If this be true, if we may venture to speak of any of our poetry as continental, the poems make us understand, better than any historical statement can do, that the first English were not in Britain, but in the Low Dutch lands and Denmark — that there was an England there before our England. The first emigration was to Britain, the second to America. And as the Pilgrims — and I use a fine comparison of Freeman's — "took with them to America the Bible, an old Shakspere, their ballads, the Gesta of English soldiers and sailors, in the memory of nurses, children, and women, so the English brought to Britain, in that first pilgrimage, *Widsith*, *Beowulf*, *The Fight at Finnsburg*."[2] Many other lays, no doubt, came with them, but their verse, Time, too greedy of the excellent, "devoured with privy paw, and nothing said."

[1] Vigfusson has written a short essay in the supplement to the *Corp. Poet. Boreale*, in which he more than suggests that Arminius is identical with Siegfried. If this be true, and there is much probability in the argument, it adds another charm to the great story, and a new interest to the statement of Tacitus. The Roman soldiers may then have heard the earliest lays of the Volsung and Niblung saga. Arminius, "canitur adhuc barbaros apud gentes."

[2] I cannot find the passage; I quote from memory. I may as well say in this note that the mention of Attila in *Widsith*, in our earliest English poem, written perhaps before the English left for Britain, adds an additional interest to Mr. Hodgkin's theory that it was the pressure of the Huns at the back of the north-German tribes which was the cause of the English migration. Two great sea-ruling peoples arose then from the fierce driving of the Huns — the Venetians and the English.

CHAPTER II

BEOWULF

Introduction

The Beowulf MS. (Cotton Vitellius A. xv.) was one of those collected by Sir Robert Cotton. It was in Little Deans Yard, Westminster, when the fire which, in 1731, destroyed so many manuscripts took place, and was fortunately among those which were not fatally injured. In 1753, having spent some time in the old dormitory at Westminster, it was transferred to the British Museum.

In 1705 Wanley, employed by Hickes, the Anglo-Saxon scholar, to make a catalogue of the old northern books in the kingdom, discovered the poem of Beowulf in the Cottonian library and calls it a *tractatus nobilissimus poeticè scriptus.* It is a parchment codex, and the handwriting of the two copyists is of the beginning of the tenth century. Thorkelin, a Danish scholar, had two copies of it made in 1786, and published the whole of it for the first time in 1815. This edition made the poem known, and it was discussed in English and foreign reviews. Meantime, in 1805, Sharon Turner gave the first account of the poem in his history of the Anglo-Saxons. Turner again, in 1823, and Conybeare, in 1826, filled up that account and translated portions of *Beowulf* into English verse, and in 1833 and 1837 John M. Kemble edited, with historical prefaces, and translated the whole of the poem. This scholarly book increased the interest of foreign scholars in the poem; and, since then, a great number of editions and translations have been published, while the essays, dissertations, articles, and notices on the poem and the subjects contained in it, fill a long list, and are written by English, French, German, Dutch, Danish, and American scholars.

The poem, consisting of 3183 lines, is divided into two parts by an interval of fifty years, the first containing Beowulf's

great deeds against the monster Grendel and his dam, the second Beowulf's conquest of the Fire-drake and his death and burial. The first division may be again divided into two — the fight with Grendel, and the fight with Grendel's mother — and some suppose that they are due to different hands. Several episodes are introduced which are linked on, often very roughly, to the history of Beowulf, and two or three of these seem to be taken from other sagas of even an earlier date than the original lays of the legend.

The same kind of controversy which has raged over the composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* has raged also over *Beowulf*. It is said that it is a single poem composed by one man; and, on the contrary, that it is a poem built up, in process of time, by various hands, and consisting of various lays of different ages; and this opinion, to take one instance, has been worked out by Müllenhof with a minuteness which makes the most severe demands upon our credulity. We are to conceive first of two old lays by different authors, then of a continuation of one of these, and then of an introduction to the whole by two other authors. The fifth — a reviser — added another portion and altered the previous work to suit his addition, and another reviser, the sixth in the series, increased the poem by episodes from other sagas and by Christian interpolations. Elaborate arrangements of this kind are as doubtful as they are interesting. The main point, however, seems clear. *Beowulf* was built up out of many legends which in time coalesced into something of a whole, or were, as I think, composed together into a poem by one poet. The legends were sung in the Old England across the seas, and brought to our England by the Angles, or by that band of Jutes or Saxons whom many suppose to have settled, at an early time, in northern Northumbria. They were then sung in Northumbria, added to by Northumbrian singers, and afterwards, when Christianity was still young, compressed and made into a poem by a Christian singer.

The first question we have to ask is with regard to the date of the story. Is it entirely mythical and legendary, or is there any actual history contained in it which will enable us to date its composition? Such a connection with known history has been suggested. The Hygelac of the poem, Beowulf's lord, has been identified with the King Chochilaicus, who is mentioned in the *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours, and in another chronicle — the *Gesta Regum Francorum*.

About 512–520, when the conquest of Britain had but begun, when the victory of the Britons at Mount Badon caused a long

pause in the advance of the English, we are told that Chochilaicus made an expedition from the modern Götaland to the Attuarii of the Frisian shore — the Hetware of the poem — to plunder and to slay. When he was about to leave, having laden his ships with slaves and spoil, the Frankish king Theodoric sent his son to attack him with an army of Franks and Frisians. In the battle Chochilaicus fell and all the booty was recovered.

This affair is four times mentioned in the poem of *Beowulf*, if we identify Hygelac with Chochilaicus. We are told that fate carried away Hygelac in feud against the Frisians. He fell under his shield. His life and the jewelled collar he had from Beowulf passed into the power of the Franks. Beowulf himself, before he goes down to fight with the dragon, tells of this fight; how Hygelac fell, how he avenged his lord's death. Two other allusions are made in the poem to the same expedition and battle. It is said, therefore, that it must have been after the date of 520 that the main story of the poem arose. Of that there can be no doubt, but we have also to remember that parts of the poem are drawn from lays older than 520; lays, some of which, as the preface about Scyld, may go back to a remote antiquity. But the poem itself carries us past the death of Hygelac in 520 to Beowulf's death in 570. Only after that date, then, could the last part — the fight with the Dragon — begin to be welded to the first part of the story, and this would take at least thirty years to accomplish. This would bring us to the year 600. If we take that date, and if we make the poem Northumbrian, this first interweaving of the lays would be made about the time of Æthelfrith, before Northumbria had become Christian.[1]

The second question to ask is, Where is the scene of the poem laid? It has been supposed by some, who hold that it was composed from end to end in England, that the scenery is English, and Mr. Haigh has ingeniously endeavoured to identify its descriptions with places on the coast of Yorkshire. But there is not one word about our England in the poem, not a single hint that the original singers knew of the existence of such a people as the English in Britain. The personages, the

[1] This argument is based on the supposition that Beowulf was, at least partly, an historical personage. But the supposition is a doubtful one, and we can come to no certainty with regard to the date of the story. I have almost assumed that the poem arose into shape in Northumbria, but Professor Earle thinks that Mercia was the place of its birth, and Ten Brink endeavours to establish West Saxon connections for it. Professor Earle's interesting book, *The Deeds of Beowulf*, has just been published, and his theory of the origin of the poem is fully expounded in it.

tribes are all of the continent — North, South, East and West Danes, the Geats, the Sweons, and the Frisians. The Danes dwelt in Seeland, and their chief town was there; the Geats in Scandinavia, in Götaland, and their king's town was on the west coast near the mouth of the Götaelf. The name Wederas and Weder-Geatas suggested to Grein a connection with the Island Väderöe or Veiröe, and with the group of islands Väderöane. The scenery then is laid on the coast of the North Sea and the Kattegat, the first act of the poem among the Danes in Seeland, the second among the Geats in South Sweden.

It is held then that the earliest lays of the story arose among the Geats and the Danes, and it is chiefly with these tribes, their manners, and their customs, that we are here concerned. But their manners and their customs were the same as those of the Angles. Angle and Geat and Dane spoke the same language, and were all kinsmen — and I am not sure whether we might not with propriety call Angle the tribes of South Sweden, or at least the Geats of the poem. At any rate *Beowulf* became English. The earliest lays of the poem were adopted by the older England on the mainland,[1] the scenery of the poem was scenery with which the elder English were well acquainted before they came to Britain. However we may hold that the poem was altered and edited, its foundation lays were sung by a people who lived in South Sweden, in Denmark, in the Isles, and about the Elbe. Having thus conjectured the date at which the story began to take shape, and the place in which it arose, we may ask what theory we may form concerning its upbuilding. A multitude of theories have been put forward, differing here and there in minor points from one another. But the main lines are almost the same in the greater number, and I have brought them together here into as compact a form as I

[1] There is a theory of Ettmüller's which is interesting. In his view the story arose in the sixth or seventh century among the Geatas, inhabitants of South Scandinavia, who along with the Danes set up a Dano-Gautic kingdom which lasted till 720 or 730 A.D. But there were Danish and Geat settlers from this kingdom in Northumbria in the eighth century, and these brought the Song of Beowulf with them. Then some English poet, a layman, perhaps a pagan, put it into vernacular English. Afterwards, in the eighth or ninth century, this poem was redone by a clerical person in the West Saxon dialect.

Another suggestion may be made. If it should ever come to be clearly established — as some believe — that a branch of the same Jutish folk who seized on Kent in 450, had, about the same time, settled on the coast of Scotland, south of the Forth, so that Eadwine when he came there found English already spoken in the country — why then, the mythical lays of Beowa (added afterwards to the Beowulf legend) may have been brought to this part of England and sung in English there as early as the fifth century — and by the very folk, the Jutes, among whom they originally rose. The Angles would then have found them there, heard them sung, and adapted these mythic lays to their Beowulf story.

can.[1] The account is eclectic; I have added a few conjectures of my own, and I must risk some repetition for the sake of clearness.

The date of the death of Hygelac (512–520) is taken as the starting-point of the poem, and it is supposed that there was a Beowulf — an historical personage — who was present at his overthrow, a relation of Hygelac's, a mighty warrior and seaman, whose strength was very great — so that in tradition it was said to be as the strength of thirty men — and who slew the slayer of Hygelac in the fight. The fame of this great warrior (unmentioned in the *Chronicle* of Gregory of Tours) had been, according to the poem, spread far and wide among the Geats, the Island Danes, and the Angles, but now it became still greater. In every hall, at every feast, while he was alive, his gests were sung, and out of these rude songs was formed the germ of the story. After his death in 570 he grew into the legendary hero; wonderful tales collected round his boyhood, like the story of the swimming match with Breca, and his manhood's deeds became more and more marvellous. These legends entered into the original historic lays or became separate lays. A hero saga had begun, and was spread all over South Sweden and Denmark, among Geats, Danes, Angles, and it may be among the Saxons. That is the first step. The second is the addition to the legend of already existing myth, and of lays which were older than the historic Beowulf, older, that is, than the sixth century. It is suggested that there was among these Scandinavian, Danish, and Angle tribes an ancient myth concerning a divine hero whose name was Beowa, whom the introduction of the poem describes as one of the ancestors of Hrothgar the Dane. Beowa is the son of Scyld, son of Sceaf, who appears in the Anglo-Saxon genealogies as one of the ancestors of Woden. Beaw is his name in these genealogies, and we find traces of him in some names of places in England, such as Beowanhamm and Grendlesmere. This mythic hero was the real conqueror of Grendel and the conqueror of the Dragon. As time went on, these mythic deeds were transferred to the historic Beowulf. The subject had now grown into almost epic proportions. Not very much later the second part of the Grendel story was added to the first — the fight

[1] They will all be found with all their differences in Wülker's *Grundriss*, pp. 269, etc. etc. The above account follows, on the whole, the analysis Ten Brink, following others, makes of the origin of the lays; but it does not disallow, but rather avers, that the poem, as we have it, was put into form by one poet, and with a distinct effort at unity of effect and purpose.

with Grendel's mother. The additions afterwards made — the episode of Scyld, of Finn's battle, of the Swedish war, of Thrytho,[1] and others — were such as might easily be foisted in by different bards, to fill up the portions of the saga which they chose out for their evening song to the warriors. Many more, no doubt, crept in, but those that remain are those which Time has selected. The lays in this condition were developed in our England and continued to be sung, even after the introduction of Christianity, in their ancient pagan shape. The warriors in hall were not likely to ask for any Christianising of these songs. Lastly, some poet, with much sympathy for heathen sagas and with as much Christianity as belonged to a man of the world, took all the lays, recast them in his own mind, formed them into a whole, embodied the episodes out of other sagas, conceived the character of Beowulf afresh, and with an ethical purpose, made it the central motive of the whole, and wrote the poem, for the most part, as it is. This is different from saying, as so many do, that it was a fortuitous congeries of lays; but, at the same time, it asserts — and it is necessary to assert this — that there were separate Beowulf lays existing, of different ages, long before this continuous poem was composed by a single poet with a single aim. He used these lays, and sometimes, it seems to me, inserted their very words. Existing thus in Northumbria from the beginning, as I think, of the eighth century, it passed through England, and I imagine that now and again slight additions were made to it by those who wished to Christianise it more than the original writer had done. To such persons, we owe, it may be, the homiletic parts of the poem. The final fortune that befell it was its translation into the Wessex dialect, and it is in that dialect that we possess it.

The last thing to say with regard to these questions of date, origin, and place is that we may fairly claim the poem as English. It is in our tongue, and in our country alone that it is preserved. The memory of it seems to have died out of South

[1] The episode of Thrytho, for example, and all the allusions to the Offa legend in the latter part of the poem might very easily have been intruded into it by some singer of Offa's court, in order to please or admonish the king, or Ecgferth his son. The poem reads in the special place where this episode occurs as if this had been done. It is there in much confusion, and the insertion seems never to have been harmonised with the original. I should conjecture that this episode was the very last which was introduced into the poem. This is very different from saying, as Earle does, that the Offa episode gives the key to the formation of the whole poem; and that the poem was made, as it stands, at the court of Offa, with the distinct purpose of instructing Ecgferth in the duties of a prince.

Sweden and the Danish isles. It was kept alive by the Angles, and those who preserved it and the country that sheltered it may claim the honour of its possession. In its pages are our folk, their ways of life and fashion of thought; and not only ours, but those of all North Teutonic folk from the end of the fifth century to the end of the seventh, to the end, I daresay, of the eighth. Any record of the manners and customs of the Teutonic peoples of those centuries is of great historical value. We have in the ancient Teutonic laws hints which throw light upon the habits of that time; but we have little that vividly represents the daily life of the North Teutonic peoples. It is this very want which is supplied by *Beowulf*. That tale gives us a picture of human life at this early time — let us say from the sixth to the eighth century — full of detail, painted in colours fresh and vivid, in which we see the works of war and peace, the king's hall, the harbour and the coast, the ships a-sailing, the life of the rovers, the settled town, the moorland round it, the hunt, the feast, the relations of the chief to his thegns and to his people, the customs of the court, of land and of gifts, the position of women, the burial of great personages. Behind the wars and tribal wanderings, behind the contentions of the great, we watch in this poem the steady, continuous life of home, the passions and thoughts of men, the way they talked and moved and sang and drank and lived and loved among one another and for one another. This is the value of *Beowulf* as history, and it is of especial worth to us. It is a record of the way our forefathers lived both on the continent and in our own country, and the record ought to be of surpassing interest.

There are other matters of interest which belong to the poem, matters religious, mythical, and literary, but they will be better discussed in another place. At present only one thing more remains before we come to the poem itself. It is to collect out of it the early history of its hero, and to bring that history up to the point at which the poem begins. There are materials enough for this work. Many allusions are made to the hero's youth. He gives an account of his early years in his death song. His dearest comrade, Wiglaf, speaks of his early wars. To collect all these scattered hints into one continuous story will make the whole poem clearer, and will enable me to sketch the character of Beowulf as he appears in youth and manhood. It is the English ideal of a hero as it was conceived by an Englishman some twelve hundred years ago.

Among the thegns who served Hrethel, King of the Geats, was Ecgtheow, of the family of the Waegmundings, a wise

and great warrior; and Hrethel, seeing his prowess, gave him his only daughter to wife, and of these two came Beowulf whom his grandfather loved, for he left to him a famous coat of mail that Weland the great forgeman had smithied. Now Hrethel had three sons, Herebeald, Haethcyn, and Hygelac, and these were uncles of Beowulf. The first two perished before the action of the poem opens, and only Hygelac was left alive to be King of the Geats. Hygelac had a daughter who is scarcely in the story, and, by his second (?) wife Hygd a son called Heardred, Beowulf's cousin. Not one of these is left alive at the conclusion of the poem. On his mother's side all Beowulf's kindred are gone.

On his father's side, that is among the Waegmundings, none are left but Wiglaf, son of Weohstan; the last thus of all the hero's race, for Beowulf died childless. This fewness of kindred, this solitariness, is one of the pathetic points of the poem. Beowulf speaks of it again and again; to Hrothgar, to Hygelac, to others; and it is the last of his thoughts when he is dying. This, as well as his immense strength, isolates the hero, and the inward pathos of it — always great to a Northman — gave him, it may be, some of that gentleness for which, among a violent race, he is celebrated in the saga. Mildness and more than mortal daring meet in him, and the mildness, even more than the daring, separates his figure from the rest.

Ecgtheow, his father, had in his younger days great praise among the coasts and isles for the mighty fight he had with Heatholaf, a Wylfing, whom he slew with his own hand. Then he took to roaming the seas and reached in his roaming the court of Hrothgar, King of the Scylding Danes, when Hrothgar was still young, and he became the king's man. For Hrothgar healed, for his sake, Ecgtheow's feud with the Wylfings, sending old-time treasures to them over the water's ridge. Afterwards, Ecgtheow went back to the land of the Geats, taking with him his son Beowulf, who seems to have been known, perhaps born, at Hrothgar's court, and settled in his home, "living many winters ere he died, and all the wise men, far and wide on earth, remembered him." This wisdom descends to Beowulf. Though he is young when he comes to Hrothgar to conquer Grendel, it is of his counsel as much as of his strength that we hear. Wealhtheow, the queen, begs him to be friendly in counsel to her sons. Hrothgar says to him, "thou holdest thy fame with patience, and thy might with prudence of mind. Thou shalt be a

comfort to thy people and a help to heroes." When he gives an account of the patched-up truce between the Danes and the Heathobeards, his political vision of the end shows how clear and experienced was his judgment of human nature. When Hygelac his lord is dead, Hygd the queen begs him to rule the kingdom because its foes were many, and none could order matters more wisely than he. When he is dying, he looks back on his life, and that which he thinks of the most is not his great war-deeds, but his patience, his prudence, his power of holding his own well, and of avoiding new enmities. Nowhere is this temper better shown than in the words he speaks to Hrothgar when the king bursts out into an old man's passionate sorrow for the death of Æschere, his dearest thegn — "Sorrow not, wise man," says Beowulf, "it is better that a man should avenge his friend than mourn him overmuch. Each of us must await the close of life. Let him who can, gain honour before he die. That is best for a warrior, when he is dead. But do thou, throughout this day, have patience of thy woes; I look for that from thee."

Gentle like Nelson, he had Nelson's iron resoluteness. What he undertook to do, he went through without a thought save of getting to the end of it. His very words when he spoke made those who heard him conscious of his firm-set purpose (line 611). "Firm-minded Prince" is one of his names. The heights his character gained he was able to keep; and a similar phrase to that is twice used of the hero. Fear is wholly unknown to him, and he seems, like Nelson, to have inspired his captains with his own courage. It is a notable touch that when his thegns go to bed in the hall that Grendel haunts, it is said of them "that none of them thought that he should ever again seek his well-loved home, the folk in the free burg where he was brought up" — and with this thought they all fell asleep. It is a trait worthy of the crew of the *Victory*.

But his gentleness did not keep him back from fierce self-defence. When Hunferth accused him of being beaten in his match with Breca, his answer is full of scorn, of mocking, and of savage retort. "Drunken with beer, my friend, hast thou spoken of Breca — thou who wast thine own brother's murderer. Grendel, the grisly monster, had never wrought so many ills for thy king, nor such a shame in Heorot, had thy courage been as fierce as thou claimest!" Yet afterwards, when Hunferth, sober, lends him the old-world sword, Hrunting, he forgets his wrath and asks, if he die in his fight with Grendel's mother, that Hunferth may have one of his own

swords. This swift wrath, forgetfulness, and generosity, are all of Nelson's character. The boastfulness was not. Beowulf always boasts before a battle of what he has done and will do against the foe. When he is going to die he sings a death-lay of his own glories. This, of which in some writer I have seen blame, is the fashion of the Northmen. Every Icelandic story is full of it, and all who hear Beowulf boast are as much pleased as the above writer is displeased.

Nor was he less prompt in the blood-feud than in speech, but the vengeance was not private or hasty. It is specially said of him that he did not, like some others, "kill his drunken hearth-companions; nor was his mind cruel." So also his sense of honour, of which he was so jealous, was not held in a nice readiness to take personal offence, but in absolute truthfulness — "I swore no false oaths," he said when dying. So also he kept his honour in faithfulness to his lord — "on foot, alone in front, while life lasted, he was his king's defence." He kept it in an equal faithfulness when his lord was dead, and that to his own loss; for when Hygd offered him the kingdom he refused; and trained Heardred, Hygelac's son, "to war and learning; guarded him kindly with honour," and avenged him when he was slain. He kept it in generosity, for he gave away all the gifts he received; in courtesy, for he gave gifts even to those who had been rude to him, and he is always gentle and grave with women. Above all, he kept it clean in war, for these things are said of him — "So shall a man do when he thinks to gain praise that shall never end, and cares not for his life in battle." "Let us have fame or death!" he cries; and when Wiglaf comes to help him against the dragon, and Beowulf is wrapt in the flame, Wiglaf recalls to him the aim of his whole life. "Beowulf beloved, bear thyself well. Thou wert wont to say in youth that thou wouldst never let Honour go. Now, strong in deeds, ward thy life, firm-souled Prince, with all thy might; I will be thy helper."

These are the qualities of the man and the hero, and I have thought it worth while to dwell on them because they represent the ancient English ideal, the manhood which pleased the English folk even before they came to Britain; and because, in all our history since Beowulf's time, for 1200 years or so, they have been repeated in the lives of the English warriors by land and sea whom we chiefly honour. The type, especially, of the great sea-captains has been the same throughout. But it is not only the ideal of a hero which we have in Beowulf, it is also the ideal of a king; the just governor, the wise politician, the

builder of peace, the defender of his own folk at the price of his life; the "good king, the folk-king, the beloved king, the war-ward of the land," the winner of treasure for the need of his people, the hero who thinks in death of those who sail the sea; the gentle and terrible warrior who is buried amid the tears of his people.[1]

When Ecgtheow, to return to the tale, from whom this prudence and wisdom of Beowulf came, had settled down at home, Hrethel, Beowulf's grandfather, took the boy at seven years old into his court, gave him treasures and the daily feast; and remembering his kinship, made him equal to his own sons, Herebeald, Haethcyn, and Hygelac. But the boy was at first slothful, and the Geats thought him an unwarlike prince, and long despised him. Then, like many a lazy third son in the folk-tales, a change came; he suddenly showed wonderful daring, and was passionate for adventure. In this youthful prime he challenged Breca to the swimming match and the slaying of sea-monsters, and proved himself the master of the stormy sea. After that, tragic sorrow fell upon his grandfather's house. Haethcyn, Hrethel's second son, slew by mistake his eldest brother, piercing him to the heart with "an arrow from his hornèd bow," and Beowulf, more than sixty years afterwards, recalls in a pathetic passage the terrible grief of Hrethel, and compares it to the grief of an aged freeman who lives to see his young son hung on the gallows tree, a joy of ravens. Old and gray-headed, he can give his boy no help. Morning after morning he remembers his dead.

2456. Sorrow-laden does he look, in the Bower of his son,
On the wasted wine-hall, on the wind-swept resting-places,
Now bereft of joyous noise.
Far the Riders sleep;
In their howe the heroes lie. Clang of harp is there no more,
In the dwellings no delight, as in days of old.[2]

So Hrethel mourned; "dirge after dirge he sang. All too empty meadows and dwellings seemed to him," and of that

[1] At this point of view we may fall in with Professor Earle's contention that the poem was intended to set up an heroic example of a king and warrior. "It is, in short," says Earle, "the institution of a prince."

[2] These verses have the look of an insertion, as if the poet knew of this mournful song and used it for this place. I should like to be able, in this fashion, to class it as an old English lyric. It has picturesqueness, simplicity, and passion; and a sweet movement. Compare —

He saddens, all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall,
And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight.

pain he died. And Haethcyn his brother's slayer became king, and strife broke out between him and the Sweons over the wide water. For Haethcyn had borne away the young wife of Ongentheow, the Sweon king, in vengeance of the raiding Ohthere and Onela, Ongentheow's sons, had done on his land at Hreosnabeorh. Then Ongentheow, old and terrible, pursued and hewed down the sea-chief Haethcyn, and took again his wife. He drove his foes before him into Raven's-wood, and they were weary of wounds, bereft of their king. All the night long he laid siege against them, taunting them that in the morning he would slay them with the sword or hang them on the gallows for sport to the fowls of the air. But in the dawn they heard Hygelac's horn and trumpets sounding, and took comfort. Brother came to avenge brother, Hygelac to avenge Haethcyn, following the bloody tracks of yesterday's battle. And Ongentheow sought the heights, fearful of the seamen, warding his wife and sons, and refuged in the earth fort. But victory was to Hygelac; Ongentheow's gray hairs did not save him from death. Wulf, son of Wonred, met the Sweon king, and smote so hard that the blood spurted in streams under his hair. Fiercely the old hero struck back, and Wulf fell, his helmet cleft, on the earth, but was not yet fated, and stood up, though his wound pained him. Then Eofor, Wulf's brother, rushed in on Ongentheow, and let his broadsword — an old sword of the giants — break over the shield-rim on the helmet of Ongentheow, and the king bowed down, struck to his life. And Eofor took from him his byrnie of iron, his hard-hilted sword and his helm, and carried them to Hygelac. So Hygelac became king, and gave gifts to Wulf; and to Eofor he gave his only daughter. That is the feud and that the enmity between the Sweons and the Geats.[1]

In some of these wars Beowulf took part. "He had avenged," he says, "the sorrows of the Weders." But he had also roamed the seas and undertaken many adventures, and by the time he went to Hrothgar, when the poem opens, he had seen many of the fates of men. We are told that his strength was spoken of "from hall to hall by the sea-farers," and his fame widespread, through distant ways. Though he was still

[1] Nor then did it end, for the grandsons of Ongentheow — Eanmund and Eadgils — came into the land of the Geatas, and Eanmund slew Heardred, Hygelac's son, at a feast. Weohstan the Waegmunding, Wiglaf's father, then took up the feud and slaughtered Eanmund. Long afterwards Eadgils, invading again the Geatas, is slain by Beowulf. Three generations the quarrel lasted, and when Beowulf dies, one of his warriors declares that the deadly hate will break out again.

young then, he had known life, and it seemed to him grim; needing fortitude rather than joy. To deepen this, came the Teutonic doctrine of the fate-goddess Wyrd, whose hand arranged the destinies of men, and had settled their death-day. The name of the goddess passed to the thing she ordained, and in the later interpolations of the poem the word is used in this sense, as well as in the sense of a personal Being. We hear of Wyrd herself, and we hear of the Weirds of men. The doctrine naturally acted differently on different types of men, and the poet makes it act with distinction on Beowulf himself. It settles his courage with firmness in the midst of desperate adventure. "'Wyrd' goes ever as it must," he says, when he thinks he may be torn by Grendel to pieces. "It shall be," he cries, when he goes to fight the dragon, "for us in the fight as Wyrd shall foresee." Yet his position is not that of pure Fatalism. The goddess may save a man if only his courage keeps his might at full strength in the battle. "Wyrd often preserves a hero from death if his power is at its best. Nor yet was I fated," he says to Hygelac when he describes his fight with Grendel's mother. While this sense of a fixed fate made him resolute to put into battle all his strength, it also established in him, combined as it was with his gentleness and tenderness, that grave melancholy of life so characteristic of the Northmen. However men fought and endured, Wyrd had doomed them. This appears all through the poem, and Beowulf's last words are, "Wyrd carried away all my kinsmen at the fated time."

It was, then, not only the mighty aspect of the man, with his thirty-fold strength, but it was also the grave conception he had of life written on his face, which made the warden of the coast, and Wulfgar, when they beheld him, say, "Never saw I greater earl, nor one of a more matchless air." With this went also the passion for new life, for movement, which Tennyson has drawn in *Ulysses*, but which is far more English than Greek; the inability to remain at ease, the longing "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield," which has always been the mark of English seamen.

Hygelac was now at peace; all the wars were over; and Beowulf could not stay feasting in the hall. Some wandering sailors told him of the trouble of Hrothgar from Grendel. I will go on adventure, he thought, as Drake would think years afterwards, and deliver the Danish king. His thegns "whetted him" to the deed; the sea-chief sailed away, and the poem begins. We approach it with a reverence which it deserves for

its great age, and with a delight which is born of its association with the history of our people and our poetry. It is a moment of romantic pleasure when we stand beside the long undiscovered sources of an historic river, beside whose waters a hundred famous cities have arisen. It is a moment of the same romantic pleasure when we first look at the earliest upwelling of the broad river of English poetry, and think of the hundred cities of the imagination that have been built beside its stream.

CHAPTER III

BEOWULF

The Poem

The poem opens with an account of the forefathers of Hrothgar the Scylding, King of the Danes. He is the builder of Heorot, the hall where Beowulf contends with Grendel. Hrothgar is the second son of Healfdene, who is the son of another Beowulf than the hero of the poem; and this other Beowulf is the son of Scyld, from whom the dynasty of the Scyldings takes its name. In ancient days, so ran the legend, Scyld, when he was but a child, was drifted in an open boat to the shores of the Danes. When coming thus out of the secret of the sea the bark touched the land, the folk found the naked child lying asleep in the midst of arms and gems and golden treasure, and took him up and hailed him king. With as many treasures as he brought, with so many they sent him away when he died.

As he came alone and mysteriously out of the sea, so he passes away alone and mysteriously into the sea, and the introduction to the poem describes his burial. It is the burial of a hero who had passed into a divine being, but it is also the burial of a great sea-king, the earliest record by some hundred years — for the introduction is probably from an ancient song about Scyld — of many burials of the same kind among the Northern lords; but touched with so poetic a hand that it is first of all accounts in art as it is first in time.

When the hour of fate had come, Scyld departed. Then his faithful comrades bore him down to the flowing of the sea,

> There at haven stood, hung with rings,[1] the ship,
> Ice-bright, for the outpath eager, craft of Æthelings!

[1] *Hringed-stefna* is sometimes translated "with curved prow," but it means, I think, that in the prow were fastened rings through which the cables were passed which tied it to the shore.

So their lord, the well-beloved, all at length they laid
In the bosom of the bark, him the bracelet-giver, —
By the mast the mighty king. Many gifts were there,
Fretted things of fairness brought from far-off ways! —
Never heard I of a keel hung more comelily about
With the weeds of war, with the weapons of the battle,
With the bills and byrnies. On his breast there lay
A great heap of gems that should go with him,
Far to fare away in the Flood's possession.

. . . . . .

Then they also set all of gold a standard,
High above his head; let the heaving ocean bear him,
Gave him to the sea. Sad was then their soul,
Mourning was their mood. None of men can say,
None of heroes under heaven, nor in hall the rulers,
For a truthful truth, who took up that lading.

Beowulf, ll. 30–40, 47–52.

Thus, into the silence of the sea the hero went alone, lying dead among his treasures, and the wind in his banner of battle. It is a later heathen belief that the souls pass over an unknown water to the realms beyond, and it may be that this belief was one of the reasons why the Northmen sometimes buried their dead in boats, so that when they came to this great sea they might have carriage. Odinn, in after-myth, receives those who are buried like Scyld. When Sigmund bears Sinfiötli to the seashore, he lays him in a skiff which a gray-mantled pilot brings to the beach. This is Odinn, and he sails away with the body. Balder himself, whose myth is later than this of Scyld, is buried in a great ship. The gods place his body on a pyre in the midst of the bark; it is set on fire, and pushed into the sea.[1] Even a living man, in later times, buried himself in the way of Scyld. Flosi, in the Njal saga, weary of life, puts out to sea in a boat that all men called unseaworthy. "'Tis good enough," he said, "for a death-doomed man." Of him, too, it might be said, "none of men could tell who took up that lading."

As the poem begins with this burial, so it ends with the burial of Beowulf. His burial has nothing mythic, nothing mystic surrounding it. It might be that of an historical personage; and the contrast between the shore-burial and the

[1] In the Ynglinga Saga, the burial of Haki is nearer to that of Scyld. Sore wounded, he had one of his ships loaded with dead men and weapons, and the sail hoisted. Then he let tarred wood be kindled, and a pyre made on the ship, while the wind blew seaward. Almost dead, he was laid on the pyre and the burning ship sailed out to sea. None of these, however, quite resemble the burial of Scyld, the most romantic, I think, of them all.

sea-burial is worth making immediately. Beowulf, dead after his fight with the dragon, and his gray hair lying round his head, is borne to the top of the great cliff that overlooks the sea, to the very edge, where the wanderers on the sea may hereafter mark his lofty barrow. The cliff has its own name. Men saw from its height the whales tumbling in the waves, and called it Whale's Ness (Hrones-naes). There then the folk of the Geats made ready a funeral pyre, firm-fixed on the earth, and they hung it with helms and with shields of the war-host, with shining shirts of battle, as the hero had asked of them —

In the midst thereof the mighty-famous king,
Their beloved lord, mourning, laid the warriors.
Then the hugest of Bale-fires 'gan the heroes waken
High upon the hill, and the reek of wood arose
Swart above the swimming fire,[1] while the hissing sound of flame
Was with weeping woven — for the wail of wind was still —
Till the fire had broken house of bone in twain,
Hot upon his heart . . . . . .
Heaven devoured the smoke.

Beowulf, l. 3143.

This was the burning; after the burning the barrow is raised; and it shall be told at the end how the people of the Weders built up on the point of the Ness a mound, high and broad, to be seen from far by the sailors whom Beowulf loved. There is yet another burial told of in the poem. The bard at Hrothgar's table sings of the death of Hnaef, kinsman of Hildeburh (perhaps her brother), and of the burning of Hildeburh's son on the same pyre as Hnaef. "The blood-stained battle-sark, the golden helm, the boar crest, iron-hard, were piled on the wood; and, with the two chieftains, many another Ætheling who had fallen, writhing on the field of slaughter."

Then beside the pyre of Hnaef Hildeburh bade
Lay her well-beloved son all along the blazing flame,
For to burn the bone-chest — on the bale to place him.
Wretched was the woman, wept upon his shoulder,
Sorrowed in her dirges, and the smoke of war arose![2]
Curling to the clouds went the greatest of corpse-fires,
Hissing round the burial-howe. Then the heads were molten,
Gaped the gates of all the wounds; then out gushed the blood

[1] *Swioðole* is here, I think, the quivering clear space of vaporous flame between the burning body and the dark-rolling smoke above it; at least this is the way I here understand *swaðul* or *sweoðol*, which is taken to mean "vaporous flame," sometimes "smoky flame," but the word is obscure.

[2] The other reading is *Guðrinc*, which would mean "the hero of battle passed upwards in the flame."

From the foe's bite on the body ; and the blaze devoured all,
Greediest it of ghosts. *Beowulf*, l. 1114.

This is an inland burial, but the other two are by the sea; and the sea-note struck thus at the beginning and close of the poem is heard constantly sounding through its verse. The men are sea-folk. Beowulf in his youth is a sea-rover, a fighter with sea-monsters, a mighty swimmer of the sea. All the action is laid on the sea-coast. The inland country, not the sea, is the unknown, the terrible. Grendel and his dam are more sea-demons than demons of the moor. Their cave is underneath the sea. Nor in the last part of the poem are we without the all-prevailing presence of the ocean. The dragon lives in a cavern on the edge of the sea. The king and the dragon fight in the hearing of the waves. Beowulf's barrow, heaped high on the edge of the sea-ness, is a beacon for "those who sail through the mists of the sea." The background of all the action is the great deep — the chorus, as it were, of this story of the fates of men. Thus the ocean life, the ocean mystery, the battle with the ocean and on the ocean begin the English poetry, and they are as vivid in it now as they were in the youth of our people. The *Battle of the Baltic*, the *Fight of the Revenge*, the *Sailor Boy*, *Hervè Riel*, Swinburne's sea-songs, a hundred ballads, taste of the same brine and foam which the winds drove in the faces of the men who wrote *Beowulf*, the *Seafarer*, and the *Riddles* which concern the sea. Nay, more, the very temper of mind which pervades modern poetry of the sea — a mingling of melancholy and exaltation — is to be found in English poetry before the Conquest, and strange to say it is not found again, except in scattered ballads, till we reach our own century.

The action of the poem now begins with the voyage of Beowulf to the Danish coast. The hero has heard that Hrothgar, the chief of the Danes, is tormented by Grendel, a man-devouring monster. If Hrothgar's warriors sleep in Heorot — the great hall he has built — they are seized, torn to pieces, and devoured. "I will deliver the king," thought Beowulf, when he heard the tale from roving seamen. "Over the swan-road I will seek Hrothgar; he has need of men." His comrades urged him to the adventure, and fifteen of them were willing to fight it out with him. Among the rest was a sea-crafty man who knew the ocean-paths. Their ship lay drawn up on the beach, under the high cliff. Then

There the well-geared heroes
Stepped upon the stem, while the stream of ocean

Whirled the sea against the sand. To the ship, to its breast,
Bright and carvèd things of cost carried then the heroes,
And the armour well-arrayed. So the men outpushed,
On desired adventure, their tight ocean-wood.
Swiftly went above the waves with a wind well-fitted,
Likest to a fowl, the Floater, foam around its neck,
Till about the same time, on the second day,
The up-curvèd prow had come on so far,
That at last the seamen saw the land ahead;
Shining sea-cliffs, soaring headlands,
Broad sea-nesses. So the Sailer of the Sea [1]
Reached the sea-way's end. *Beowulf*, l. 211.

This was the voyage, ending in a fiord with two high sea-capes at its entrance. The same kind of scenery belongs to the land whence they set out. When Beowulf returns over the sea the boat groans as it is pushed forth. It is heavily laden; the hollow, under the single mast with the single sail, holds eight horses, swords and treasure and rich armours. The sail is hoisted, the wind drives the foam-throated bark over the waves, until they see the Geats' cliffs — the well-known sea-nesses. The keel is pressed up by the wind on the sand, and the "harbour-guard, who had looked forth afar o'er the sea with longing for their return" — one of the many human touches of the poem — "fastens the wide-bosomed ship with anchoring chains to the strand, lest the violence of the waves should sweep away the winsome boat."

I have brought the two voyages together that we may see the customs of embarking and disembarking twice over, and realise the kind of sea and coast the shipmen of the poem sailed by — brief stretches of sea, between short bays protected on either side by capes rising from the mainland till they became cliffs above the open sea. At the end of the bay into which Beowulf sails is a low shore, on which he drives his ship, stem on. Planks are pushed out on either side of the prow; the Weder folk slipped down on the shore, tied up their sea-wood; their battle-sarks clanged on them as they moved. Then they thanked the gods that the wave-paths had been easy to them.

The scene which follows is almost Homeric in its directness and simplicity, and in the clearness with which it is presented. On the ridge of the hill above the landing-place the ward of the coast of the Scyldings sat on his horse, and saw the strangers bear their bright shields over the bulwarks of the ship to the

[1] I have taken *sund-lida* for 'the ship'; but *sund liden*, which is Wülker's reading, makes the line "then was the *Sea sailed over*, at the end of the sea-way."

shore. He rode down, wondering, to the sea, and shook mightily in his hands his heavy spear, and called to the men—

> Who are ye of men having arms in hand,
> Covered with your coats of mail who your keel afoaming
> O'er the ocean street thus have urged along,
> Hither on the high sea
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Never saw I greater
> Earl upon this earth than is one of you;
> Hero in his harness. He is no home-stayer,
> 'Less his looks belie him, lovely with his weapons.
> Noble is his air! *Beowulf*, ll. 237, 247.

Beowulf replies that he is Hrothgar's friend, and comes to free him from "Grendel, the secret foe on the dark nights." He pities Hrothgar, old and good. Yet, as he speaks, the Teutonic sense of the inevitable Wyrd passes by in his mind, and he knows not if Hrothgar can ever escape sorrow. "If ever," he says, "sorrow should cease from him, release ever come, and the welter of care become cooler." The coast guard shows them the path, and promises to watch over their ship. The ground rises from the shore, and they pass on to the hilly ridge, behind which lies Heorot. What do they see as they look backward and forward from the ridge? This is the place to collect together all that can be said of the scenery in which the action is laid, and I shall not say anything of it, not even use an adjective, for which I have not some authority in the poem.[1]

Behind them lay the head of the bay, the low sandy shore on which they had driven their ship; the ship itself tied by cables to the strand. The deep blue water beyond spread out, between two rising nesses, to the entrance of the fiord through which, as through a gate, they saw the open sea. Only one figure animated this landscape, the Coast-ward, sitting high on his horse, with his spear resting on his thigh. Below them, as they look landward, about a mile away, the great hall, Heorot, rose in the midst of a cultivated plain, which years of labour had reclaimed from the moor and fen. On every side of it the wild land climbed slowly upwards, on one side towards the coast, on the other to the savage and uninhabited inland country.

The hall was a rectangular, high-roofed, wooden building,

[1] The sole exception to this is what I say about the gardens and the corn-land, and the women tending the cattle.

its long sides facing north and south. The two gables, at either end, had stag-horns on their points, curving forwards, and these, as well as the ridge of the roof, were probably covered with shining metal, and glittered bravely in the sun. Round about it lay the village, scattered houses, each in its own garth, with apple-trees and beehives and outhouses. Outside these was the corn-land, and the meadows on which sheep, oxen, and horses were grazing. Paths went in and out among the houses, and there was a wide meadow, like a village green, in the midst, between the hall and the houses of the hamlet, down which in the morning walked the king and queen from the sleeping-chambers to the hall, attended by their young men and maidens. On the outskirts of the meadow, and out into the open, the young men rode, breathing their horses; and in a place apart, as poets love it, walked to and fro the bard, framing his songs for the evening feast. The women sat spinning at their doors, or moved hither and thither, carrying water or attending to the cattle. This then was an island of tilled and house-built land at the edge of a wild waste of fen, but at a short distance from the sea. It is the image of a hundred settlements such as the Angles and Danes and Geats had built, and whence their young men ran out their ships to harry richer shores.

When Beowulf and his men looked inland beyond the dwellings, they saw nothing but the great moorland where the wolf and the stag and the wild boar roamed at will. Patches of wood were scattered over it, and these grew thicker towards the horizon, where the whole moor lifted into low hills. Over it, in ceaseless movement, the gray mists rose and fell, and among them, as night drew down her helm, dreadful creatures seemed to stalk, and the loathsome light of their eyes burned through the mist like flame.[1]

[1] I may as well, to illustrate this description, quote the passage from Ælfred's Orosius where Ohthere gives an account to the king of the scenery of the Northmen's coast. In his time there was, no doubt, in South Sweden and Jutland a wider fringe between the sea and the moor than that which Ohthere gives to the upper coast of Norway. But when *Beowulf* was first sung, it is more than probable that the coasts of the Geats and Danes were sparsely populated. At any rate this following passage is interesting: "Ohthere said that the coast of the Northmen was very long and very narrow. All that is fit either for pasture or plowing lies along the sea-coast, which, however, is in some parts very cloddy. Along the eastern side are wild moors, extending a long way up parallel to the cultivated land. The Finlanders dwell in the moors." The distance varies between the sea and the moors, but "northward, where it is narrowest, it may be only three miles across, but the moors are in some parts so wide that a man could scarcely pass over them in two weeks, though in other parts perhaps in six days." — Ingram's translation of Ohthere's account.

When, turning from the inland, the men looked towards the sea, they saw that the coast was broken into short bays and headlands, down to which the moor ran from the hills. Between each headland there was a narrow valley, hollowed out by descending streams, and each stream finally fell over a ledge of rock into the head of a bay. The slopes rising into the nesses were "steep and stony," and the trees that grew along the bed of the streams were rough and blasted by the sea salt and the wind — "a joyless wood." And among these fiords, at the head of a cavernous sea-gorge, there was close to Heorot a deadly place which they were afterwards to do with, of which a clear description is given in the text. It is the dwelling-place of Grendel and his dam — "the mickle mark-steppers who hold the moors" — the sea-end of a "hidden land, wolf-haunted, full of dangerous morasses." This was the scene they saw, but it was scarcely new to the men, for they daily looked on a similar landscape in their own land.

What they had now to do was to reach Heorot, and they took the "path paved with stones" which led straight from the low ridge to the "glittering hall." As they walked

> Hard and riveted by hand,
> Beamed the battle byrnie. Braced with rings, the sheer sword
> Sang upon their shirts of war[1] when aforward to the hall,
> In their grisly war-gear, ganging on they came.
> Then they set, sea-wearied, broadly-shapen shields,
> Targets wondrous hard, 'gainst the wall of Heorot!
> And they bowed above the bench, and their byrnies rattled,
> War-array of Æthelings! Up arose the spears,
> Weapons of sea rovers, stood up all together,
> Gray above, a grove of ash. *Beowulf*, l. 321.

Outside the hall a warrior on guard asks them of their ancestry and their coming.

> From what land do ye bear your gold-flakèd shields,
> Gray-coloured sarks and grinning-masked helms
> And a heap of host-shafts? Of Hrothgar I am
> Voice-man and servant. Ne'er saw I strangers —
> So many of men — of a mightier mood.
> I ween that in war-pride and not in outlawry,
> But for high-heartedness, Hrothgar ye sought.
> *Beowulf*, l. 333.

[1] This is otherwise translated — "The bright ringed-iron rang on their war-shirts," that is, the iron rings of which the byrnie was made, rattled as they moved; but we have had this before, and though repetition is frequent in Anglo-Saxon poetry we need not select a repetition when the words may bear another meaning.

Beowulf tells his tale, and Wulfgar, "who knew the usage of the court," bids them wait without while he brings their errand to Hrothgar. Hrothgar sits on the high seat in the hall with his earls around him, old and bald-headed, and declares (and it is characteristic of the great noble throughout this tale to know the lineage of all who are also noble) that he knew Beowulf's father and mother, and Beowulf himself when he was a boy. He knew also his war deeds, and that he has the strength of thirty men in his grip. Wulfgar summons the strangers in, "the king," he says, "knows their kinship, but they must go into the hall armed only with helm and swords and war-shirts; their shields and spears must be left outside;" such was the custom of the court. They left the benches then that were set against the outside of the hall on either side of the door, and entered. Beowulf saw before him a hall,[1] differing somewhat in arrangement from that of his lord Hygelac. At home among the Geats there was no dais. But here, as in the later Icelandic halls, Beowulf saw Hrothgar enthroned on a high seat at the east end of the hall. This seat is sacred. It has a supernatural quality. Grendel, the fiend, cannot approach it (line 926).

His queen, Wealhtheow, sat with him, and his daughter Freaware, and their women. At the foot of the king's "gift stool," as his seat is called, sat Hunferth[2] the speaker, perhaps the jester, the boon companion of the king. The other tables ran at right angles to the dais nearly the whole length of the hall, and were covered with boar's flesh and venison and cups of ale and mead. On these benches sat the thegns of Hrothgar, and among them his sons, between whom Beowulf is afterwards seated. In the midst, on the many-coloured floor, paved perhaps with variegated stones, were the long hearths in which the fires were piled, and in the roof were openings through which the smoke escaped. The walls and supporting shafts were ornamented with gilding and walrus bone and were hung with shields and spears, and with tapestries.

Gold-varied gleamed
Woven webs on the walls. *Beowulf*, l. 994.

[1] Both halls are of a simple construction in comparison with the elaborate and much later Icelandic hall, such as we find in the Njal Saga. In Heorot the beds are laid with their heads against the main wall, and the place they occupy is the place of the tables and benches. In a great Icelandic hall the beds are in the aisles on either side of the body of the hall, but here the hall is without aisles.

[2] *Unferth* is perhaps the best spelling of the name. He is the bitter-tongued, the envious, the fierce-tempered in his cups. His position and character resemble closely those of Conan in the Finn Legend.

This was the aspect of the hall within, and the customs that prevailed in it are now presented to us. When Beowulf had told of his wish to fight with Grendel, and Hrothgar had taken his offer with joy, seats are found for him and his companions, and the song and feast begin again. A thegn bore round the enchased ale-cup and poured out the pure drink. Danes and Geats, a goodly company, sat together.

> And the Scôp, from time to time
> Chanted clear in Heorot. There was cheer of heroes.
> *Beowulf*, l. 496.

When the song was over, Hunferth, drunk and jealous, challenges Beowulf concerning a swimming match he had with Breca, his rival. Hunferth declares that Beowulf was beaten. The answer is triumphant and laughter fills the hall. Then rose Wealhtheow, the queen, in her golden ornaments, and greeted the guests. But first she brought the full cup to her husband and bade him be blithe at the beer-drinking; and the victory-famed king took the cup with joy. Then the great queen, peace-bringer to nations, and followed by Freaware her daughter, went round the hall to each of the warriors, gave a bracelet now to one, now to another, and last of all bore the cup to Beowulf and greeted him, and the fierce hero took the cup from her hands and said —

"This was my thought when I shipped on the sea; sat down in my boat with a band of my men, that I would fully work out the will of your folk, or fall on the field of slaughter, fast in the grips of the foe. Earl-like will I fulfil the daring deed, or abide my end-day in this mead-hall." The proud words pleased the queen, and she went to sit beside her lord. And now night had come and the mists, and under its shadow-helm creatures came stalking, wan under the clouds. The king stood up, and his thegns; each man greeted the other. Hrothgar gave over the hall to Beowulf and went to his dwelling outside where the queen awaited him. Then the benches and tables were removed. Beowulf stripped off his armour, gave it in charge to one of his thegns, and laid down with naked hands, his cheek upon his pillow. Around him many a snell seaman stooped to his hall-rest.

Grendel now comes before us, and the main action of the first part of the story — the fight of Beowulf with him. I gather together all the things said of him in the poem. He is a grim and giant demon, of the old Eoten race, of so great strength that Beowulf, who has the power of thirty men,

scarcely overcomes him. His fearful head is so huge that four men carry it with difficulty. The doors of the hall burst open with the smiting of his hand, and the hall cracks and groans with the dreadful force he puts forth in battle. His whoop in pain rings through the house. The nails of his hands are like iron, monstrous claws, and it seems he wore a kind of glove, large and strange, made fast with wonderful bands, wrought by curious skill with devil's craft and out of dragon-hides.[1] Finally, he is spelled against all weapons. Like many an Iceland troll, no sword can bite his skin; he must be fought with naked hands.

He is the fiend of the moor, the quaking bog and morass. Lonely and terrible he goes, a mighty mark-stepper who holds the fen and its fastness! Perhaps the gnomic verse which tells of the Thyrs, the giant, is written with Grendel in the writer's mind — *Þyrs sceal on fenne gewunian, ana innan lande.* "The giant shall dwell in the fen, alone in the land." "In Evernight Grendel kept the misty moors." Darkness is his native land, and helmèd night. There is no joy where he is. He is called the dark death-shadow. The Christian editor brings him from Cain, with other dreadful creatures — eotens and elfs and orks and the giants (with a classical reminiscence) who fought with God. In all this he is the impersonation of the superstitious dread which men felt when they looked from their island of reclaimed land over the surrounding moors and saw the strange shapings of the cloud upon them as evening fell, and heard through the mist the roaring of the sea. Then, as men sat by the fire, dreadful tales were told, tales of those who were lost in marsh or pool, in the tempest and the snow — slain by the evil will of the ghostly dwellers in the wastes.[2] It was the same horror of the desolate lands which created in Scotland the kelpie in the black pool, the river demons of Tweed and Till, and the misshapen monsters that rose out of the sea.

For Grendel was not only the demon of the mist and moor, but also of the sea. The trackless moors in *Beowulf* ran right up to the cliffs, and the actual dwelling of Grendel and his

[1] This glove business (line 2085) is probably a Christian interpolation. No heathen Englishman would have written of devils' crafts; and the glove which is said to "hang down" is probably a kind of pouch.

[2] He seems to be the master and bringer of the mist, and we might illustrate this connection of his evil will with the stormy and misleading powers of nature by the power which Dante gives the Devil over mist and rain. "Quel mal voler," who

> Mosse il fume e il vento
> Per la virtù, che sua natura diede.

mother is in a cave, the entrance to which is under the sea, and their companions are sea-monsters. The Mere, that is, the sea-hollow where they haunt, is called the mere of the nickers, and a full account of it and its scenery is elsewhere given. The only point to be made here is that these sea-wolves, as they are called, represent not only the ghastliness of the deadly fen, but the ghastliness of the deadly sea-gulfs among the cliffs, deep, narrow-entranced clefts filled with boiling waves, which invariably collect ghostly legend round their solitudes.

The character of this man-beast is like his shape. He is said to be greedy of blood, fierce, ravenous, furious, joyless, firm in hatred of men, pleased with evil; and he is, like evil, restless. The moment night comes he roams incessantly. It adds a special touch of horror to him that, when he had emptied Heorot by his harryings, he spends the dark nights of winter in the hall. Only at night can he appear. He is the creature of the winter and the sunless gloom, like the Icelandic Trolls who, at the touch of the sun, burst asunder, or change into stone. He abhors the pleasant noise of men, and chiefly the song and the harp, like those giants who hated agriculture and the sound of church bells. It is this which leads him to attack the hall, and when he attacks there is so much of the savageness of a wild beast in his work that some have supposed that he represents the furious bear of the North. He laughs as he sees his victims, springs on them and tears them limb from limb, breaking the bones, drinking the blood, and devouring them, head and hands and feet and all. Those he does not eat in the hall he carries away to the moor and consumes them alone, unpityingly. On the first night he invaded Heorot, he slew thirty men, but after a night or two, the warriors did not sleep in the hall for twelve years, but outside in their houses, into which he does not seem to be able to enter. Now and then, however, men, with the valour of drink in them, slept in the hall, and in the morning the mad fury of the monster is plain enough. The "benches are covered with blood, the hall afloat with gore." With all this, he has, when he meets his match, the blind fear of the wild beast, terror driving him to cry out for the darkness of the morasses whence he came; terror the Icelandic story does not give to Glam.

The description of his onset when Beowulf and his thegns wait for him in the hall is full of power. "In the wan night came the shadow-ganger stalking, while the warriors slept—

all save one." Beowulf, awake in wrath, abided the battle. Then, for the poet repeats what he has said already, gathering himself together for the great event, beginning a new song —

711. From the moorland came, under misty hills,
Grendel ganging on! Wrath of God he bore;
Neath the clouds he strode.

He smote the door with his palms, and it fell inwards. Ireful, the bale-bringer trod over the fair-paved coloured floor. Loathsome light, like flame, stood in his eyes. He saw the heroes sleeping in the hall, and his heart laughed. He thought how he would glut his hunger. He seized a thegn and rent him to pieces. Then he laid hands on Beowulf and knew that at last he had met his match. Fear got hold of him, he strove to flee back into his native darkness. But Beowulf remembered his evening boast, and his fingers cracked as he gripped the monster. The hall sounded with the struggle; its walls cried aloud. It was wonder it did not fall to the ground. Were it not bound so fast with well-smithied bands of iron, it would have perished. Dreadful was the noise as the wrestlers wrought from bench to bench; dire terror stood over the North Danes who heard from the wall (from their houses outside) the whoop of Grendel, his awful song. The thegns of Beowulf join the fight, draw their old swords, but Grendel's flesh is charmed.

At last the grip of Beowulf dragged out Grendel's arm from the shoulder, the sinews were torn apart, the bone burst, and the monster, streaming forth blood, fled away doomed to the ocean-cave under the slopes of the fen. He reaches it and dies.

When the morning dawns Beowulf has hung the arm and claw of Grendel on the cross-beam above the king's seat in the hall; and many come to see them. Then the awaking of the hamlet is described. The men, riding, follow over the moor the blood-stained track of Grendel's flight until they reach the cliffs and the deep cleft in them where the waves are seething, and this is what they saw: "There the foaming sea was weltering with blood. The fearful upleaping of the waves, all mingled with ulcerous gore, boiled with blood of the sword. The death-doomed had dyed it when in his despair, he had laid down his life in the lair of the fen, his heathenish heart. There Hel[1] took him away." Then the old men and their

[1] This exactly expresses the personality and the business of the dark goddess Hel. If the line be Christian, the personality of Hel seems a remnant of the old belief.

young comrades come back from their glad course, proudly riding on their horses. They set the games on foot. They rode races on their yellow steeds where the paths seemed fair to them. A famed Ætheling, a king's thegn mindful of songs, who many old-time sagas remembered, framed a tale well bound together. We see him, as I think the passage means, pacing the meadows, musing how he will throw into words his song of praise of Beowulf when the feast begins, and he thinks, that he may weave it well, of the ancient song of Sigemund which it was his wont to sing. As the morning light grew stronger many more go to the high hall to see the wonder of Grendel's hand; and with them at last the king arrives.

> From his bridal-bower did the Ward of hoards of gold
> Mighty, march in glory; mickle was his troop.
> Known by worth he was, and, with him, his Queen,
> With a many of her maids measured down the meadow-path.
>
> *Beowulf*, l. 921.

Heorot is now cleansed, a great feast is appointed, and we again see the customs of the hall. It is filled in the afternoon with kinsmen and friends, and Hrothgar, in requital of Grendel's overthrow, gives to Beowulf a golden ensign, a helm, a coat of mail, and the great treasure of a sword. Also eight steeds are led into the hall for him and displayed, and on one of them lies the saddle itself of Hrothgar, his war-seat in battle, wrought with embroidery and gems. A sword, an heirloom, is given to each of Beowulf's thegns, and blood money paid for Hondscio, that one of them whom Grendel had torn in pieces. So was fulfilled the great duty which fell to the lot of kings — the free giving of gifts.

After this, while the feast goes on, the minstrel sings the saga of Finn and his sons, of Hengest, Hnaef and Hildeburh. When the song is over the servants pour forth the wine, and Wealhtheow came forth from the women's chamber, going under her golden crown, and offered the wine-cup to her lord, wishing him joy on the cleansing of Heorot, and on his desire to call Beowulf his son. Then she turned to Beowulf, bringing him also the cup, and with the cup gave him a byrnie and armlets and a jewelled collar, well known all over the north, as fine as the Brosings' collar that Hama wore, and had wrested from Eormanric.[1] "Use this collar, dear Beowulf!" cries the queen.

[1] "This necklace is the Brisinga-men — the costly necklace of Freyja, which she won from the dwarfs and which was stolen from her by Loki, as is told in the

When Beowulf, on his return home, recalls that festal day, he recalls it with that grave and imaginative humanity, equally touched with fatalism and tenderness, which is one of his chief qualities. "Dark and true and tender is the North" exactly marks his soul. "There was song and social glee," he says to Hygelac, "when we were at the feast that evening," and he sketches King Hrothgar, and his singing, and the old man's memories.

> There was song and social glee, and the Scylding gray,
> Asking after many (tales), told of ancient times.
> Whiles, the Beast of war waked the harp's delight,
> Greeted the glee-wood; now he told a tale
> Sooth and sorrowful; then a story strange
> Did the king big-hearted sing aright from end to end.
> Then again began that gray-headed warrior,
> All upbound with eld, for the battle strength to mourn
> That he had when young; and his heart within him swelled
> Now that old in winters on it all he thought.
> So the livelong day lingered we within,
> And delight in hall we seized till the dark came on.[1]
>
> *Beowulf*, l. 2105.

And now that night had come and Hrothgar had gone and Beowulf with him to sleep outside, the hall, as in times before Grendel had wasted it, was prepared for the sleeping of the earls of Hrothgar. They bared the bench-floor, beds and bolsters were laid over it. At their heads, hanging on the wall, they set their disks of war, their glittering shield-woods. On the shelf, over each warrior, it was easy to see the high-crested helm and the war-shirt of rings and the stout spear. This was

Edda. Like the ἱμάς of Aphrodite it awakened desire. As Here wears it, so the Norse goddess wears it. As Freyja has an inaccessible chamber, so also has Here, one which was wrought for her by Hephaistos. When Freyja breathes deep with anger, the Brising necklace starts from her breast. When Thor, to get his hammer back, dresses up in Freyja's garments, he puts on the Brisinga-men. The jewel is then so closely woven up with the myth of Freyja that from its mention here in *Beowulf* we may safely infer the familiarity of the English with the worship and story of Freyja." This is Kemble's view, but I have my doubts of it all. I think the old singers of *Beowulf* knew little or nothing about these matters.

[1] It is not an uninteresting illustration of this passage to quote the following from an account which Priscus gives of a banquet to which Attila invited him (448 A.D.). The singing habits are the same — nay, the very feelings: "When evening came on, torches were lighted, and two barbarians coming in and standing opposite to Attila recited songs previously composed, in which they sang of his victories and his warlike virtues. The banqueters gazed earnestly on the minstrels; some were delighted with the poems; others, remembering past conflicts, felt their souls stirred within them; while the old were melted into tears by the thought that their bodies were grown weak through age and their hot hearts compelled into repose." — *Dynasty of Theodosius*, Hodgkin, p. 189.

their use at night — that they were often thus ready for war, at home, as in the host, whenever their Man-lord might have need of them: an apt and ready folk they were!

While the warriors sleep, another part of the tale begins — the story of the mother of Grendel, of her vengeance for her son, and of her slaying in the sea-cavern by Beowulf. She, like her son, is a spirit of Elsewhere, foreign to human nature, greedy and raging, restless, a death ghost, a scathe of man, a huge mark-stalker, a creature of the mirk and mist. She swims the sea like a sea-monster, clutches to Beowulf in its depths; a sea-wolf (*brim-wylf*), a sea-woman (*merewif*), (*grund-wyrgen*), a wolf of the sea-bottom. Her hands are armed with claws, and grim is her grasp. No common weapon can bite her flesh, only a sword, by eotens made long since; but her blood is so venomous (she is an *aettren ellorgaest*) that even this magic-tempered blade melts away with it, like ice in the sun. No good thing belongs to her save her fierce sorrow for her son's death and her desire to avenge it. In the dead of night she bursts into the hall now reoccupied by the thegns, seizes on Æschere, Hrothgar's right-hand man in war, and bears him away to her cave. She, like her son, rent the body limb from limb. The head of Æschere was found lying on the cliff.[1] Beowulf had slept outside Heorot, but at dawn he is summoned, and loud is the king's outburst of grief when Beowulf asks him if he had a quiet night. "Ask not thou after happiness; sorrow is new again to the Dane's people. Dead is Æschere, Yrmenlaf's elder brother; my *rune-wit*, my rede-giver, my shoulder-to-shoulder man, when we in war warded our heads, when the foot warriors rushed together, and the boars (the chiefs) crashed in the onset. Such should an earl be!" He tells the tale of the night, describes the place

[1] That this story of Grendel's mother was originally a separate lay from the first seems to be suggested by the fact that the monsters are described over again, and many new details added, such as would be inserted by a new singer who wished to enhance and adorn the original tale. The details of the scenery are so particular, and seem so much derived from personal observation, that it has often occurred to me that in this second part we have the original myth (with the Grendel-mother addition), actually localised by the new poet in the scenery that surrounded the town where his tribe lived. If that should be true, and if it also should be true that the fight of Beowulf with Grendel's mother was a later addition to the first story, it makes the first story very old. The scenery in the second part is continental — that is, it was described before the Angles left their native land. The first story would then belong to a time long previous to that departure. This is a possible but a doubtful inference. It might be said that, though the first story belonged to the Angles on the continent, the second was added in England or recast in England, and the scenery drawn from English scenery, as Mr. Haigh suggests. But I remember no such place as that described on the coasts of Yorkshire or Northumberland.

where Grendel's mother lives. "Seek it if thou darest!" he cries; "I will pay thee with old treasures, with rings of gold." The reply of Beowulf is couched in his grave, half-reproving, fatalistic way. Life is nothing, high deeds and courage are all, and the vengeance for a friend. "Sorrow not, wise man" —but I have quoted the passage before—"Not in earth's breast, nor deep in the sea, nor in the mountain holt, nor in the abyss of ocean, go where she will, shall Grendel's kin escape from me."

They mount their horses then and ride to the cliffs, to the dwelling of the fiends. It is this dwelling we must now discuss. It seems to be conceived by many as a deep morass in the midst of the moor, overhung by trees. But this is a careless reading of the text. It is a sea-mere, a sea-pool. Æschere's head is found on its edge, and its edge is the sea-cliff (*holm-clif*). In its waters are sea-dragons that seek the sea; the nickers lie there on the sloping rocks of the ness, monsters that at mid-day go out into the open sea, and voyage on the sail-road. The one of these who is killed swims in the *holm* (in the sea). Beowulf, before he plunges, arms himself to mingle in the depths of the sea, to seek the welter of the sea—the *mere-grundas*, the *sund-gebland*. It is the ocean surge (the *brim-wylm*) which receives him as he plunges. The beasts who attack him are sea-beasts (*sae-deor monig*). Grendel's mother is the sea-wolf (*brim-wylf*). It is a sea-headland where Beowulf's thegns sit and watch for his return; the booty he brings back, the sword-hilt and Grendel's head, is sea-booty (*sae-lac*). When they all return, they return from the sea-cliff (*holm-clif*).

There is not a trace in all this of a deep pool in the moor, of a morass. We are on the sea-nesses, looking down into a sea-hole, and it is not difficult, from the indications given, to sketch the place with some accuracy. Indeed, so clearly is it drawn that I believe the describer had seen the very spot. In a verse of the poem it is said to be well known (line 2135), and a much greater amount of trouble is taken with this piece of natural description than is usual in early English poetry. It completes our vision of the scenery round Heorot. It tells about the range of cliffs up to the very edge of which extends the moor. It is the first in the long series of natural descriptions which have made English poetry celebrated for more than a thousand years, and the supernatural element in it is the product of that work of the imagination on Nature, and that transference of human passion to Nature, of which modern English poetry is so full. Hrothgar describes the place—

Where they ward; wolf-haunted slopes, Secret in its gloom the land-windy headlands (o'er the sea);
Fearful is the marish-path, where the mountain stream,
'Neath the Nesses' mist, nither makes its way.
Under earth[1] its flood is, nor afar from here it is,
But the measure of a mile — where the mere is set.
Over it (outreaching), hang the rustling trees;[2]
Held by roots the holt is fast, and o'er-helms the water!
There an evil wonder every night a man may see —
In the flood a fire! Of the sons of men
None alive is wise enough that abyss to know.
If the heather-stepper, harried by the hounds,
If the strong-horned stag seek out this holt-wood, —
Put to flight from far — sooner will he flee his soul,
Yield his life-breath on the bank — ere he will therein
Seek to hide his head. Not unhaunted is the place!
Thence the wylming of the waves whirlèd is on high,
Wan[3] towards the clouds, when the wind is stirring
Wicked weathers up; till the lift is waxing dark,
And the welkin weeps.

Beowulf, l. 1357.

What we see then is this. At a certain point in the cliff face, between two jutting nesses, there is a deep sea-gorge, with a narrow entrance from the sea. The waves are driven into it, boil and welter in the confined space, and are whirled on high. At the landward base of the cliffs, the rocks slope downwards, and on these rocks, as we see afterwards, the nickers (pictured from the great seals and walruses) are lying, whose habit it is — and the phrase points to an observation of real animals intruded into the tale — to sleep in the morning stretched out on the ness-slopes, and at mid-day to get ready

[1] "Under the earth" means that the stream had worn itself a deep channel far below the surface of the moor. Through this it flows till it reaches the cliff over the stony lip of which it leaps in a waterfall.

[2] *Hrimge* is Wülker's reading, and means "rime-clad or decayed." But I do not see the meaning. It was not winter when Beowulf came. Nor can it mean withered, brittle boughs, for the stream and the sea-mists would make the foliage of these trees plentiful, and withered boughs would not hang down or cover the waters with a helmet. So I have taken the reading *hrinde* = *hrinende* (rustling or roaring), O. N. *hrina*, to "resound" — which is the reading of the MS. In the Blickling Homilies, *hrimge bearwas* occurs, but I do not see that the phrase there forces us to adopt it here. There is no reason for the trees decaying in the circumstances described, but a good deal of reason in the leaping water and the dreadful storms for their roaring or rustling.

[3] *Wonn*, translated *wan* above, means *dark* or *black* in Anglo-Saxon. It is an epithet of the raven or of night. The modern meaning of the word is *pale, colourless*; and "the word," as Skeat says, "has thus suffered a remarkable change. The sense, however, was probably *dead* or *colourless* which is applicable to black and pallid alike" (*Etymological Dictionary*. W. W. Skeat). Whenever I use the word in this book, it has its Anglo-Saxon meaning of *black*.

"for a sorrow-bringing expedition into the open sea, into the sail-road." At the land end of the sea-gorge the cliff rises and forms the neck between the two lateral nesses, and the moor, coming down to the neck, has been worn away into a deep channel by the working of a mountain stream. All along this hollow channel the descending stream has made trees grow, but when the torrent comes to the edge of the cliff — "a ledge of gray stone," — it leaps over in a waterfall into the weltering waves below. Over this waterfall the trees, fast-rooted, hang down and darken the pool underneath. They rustle in the wind that comes up from below, and the vapours from the spray of the waterfall and the sea-tumble underneath mingle with the inland mists driven seaward from the moor.

I have seen such places on the coasts of Cornwall and the north-west of Ireland. I have no doubt that there are many such among the fiords of Norway and Sweden. Legends always collect round them, and the touches of fire on the flood, of land animals not daring to take shelter in them, — it is plain there was a path to the sea-level by which Beowulf and the thegns descend, — of their being the dwelling-places of the "worm-kind, wild sea-beasts, strange wave-swimmers with battle tusks, mere-women, sea-wolves, wolves of the abyss, of the sea," and the rest, might be paralleled again and again.

When Hrothgar and Beowulf and their attendant thegns mount their horses and ride to this place, additional touches of description make us realise that we are on the cliffs, and make the scenery more clear. They pass along "steep overhanging clefts by narrow roads, above precipitous cliffs and nicker houses" — that is, by paths on the side of the cliff, a precipice below them, and at their base shelving rocks, where again the great sea-beasts are said to be asleep. At last they reach the sea-hollow, where the water is tossed in waves. They descend to the rocks, and find the head of Æschere, cast down by the mere-wife ere she plunged to find her dwelling. The water is troubled and bloody, under the overhanging joyless wood. They blow on the horn an eager war-music, and the sound rouses from their sleep to a fierce anger the strange sea-dragons tumbling in the wave. The lord of the Geats shoots one with an arrow, and slays him; he is stabbed with boar-spears, and drawn with sharp hooks on to the rocks — it is a walrus-hunt, — and the men gaze on the grisly guest, the wondrous wave-swimmer. The picture is extraordinarily vivid.

Then Beowulf armed himself before he plunged, and Hunferth, honouring him whom he had mocked, gave him a well-known sword, "Hrunting by name, one of the old treasures of the world, its iron edge hardened with the sweat, that is, the blood of war, damasked as it was forged with distilled venom of twigs, and never had it deceived any man in battle." "Remember!" cried Beowulf, "O son of Healfdene, what we have spoken of before; if for thy need I lose my life, that thou wert to be in a father's stead to me. Be guardian of my hand-comrades, send the treasures thou hast given me to Hygelac, that he may know, when he see the gold, that I found a good giver of rings, and let Hunferth" — so magnanimous is Beowulf — "have the curious sword thou gavest me. I will work fame with Hrunting, or let Death take me." Then the ocean surge received him, and it seemed a day's space ere he reached the bottom. "It was a day's space," says the poem, but the phrase must be metaphorical, for he plunges in at morning, and at the ninth hour (line 1600) he comes again to land, having fought his fight and finished it.

Grendel's mother saw him, and grasped him in her dreadful claws; and the tusked sea-beasts attacked him, but the sea-wolf bore him upwards from the bottom into her ocean-hall, a cave where the water was not.[1] There was firelight in the

[1] This cave under the sea seems to be another of those natural phenomena of which the writer had personal knowledge (line 2135), and which was introduced by him into the mythical tale to give it a local colour. There are many places of this kind. Their entrance is under the lowest level of the tide. The diver plunges, and rising through the water, finds himself in a high arched cavern, with a sloping beach of sand, up which the water flows to the level of the tide. But beyond the level of the tide the cavern, covered with fine dry sand, extends inland under the rocks, lit and aired by crevices in the roof which penetrate to the outer surface of the cliff. It is in such a cave, "whose only portal was the keyless wave," that the lovers in Byron's *Island* take refuge, and Byron found the original in Mariner's account of the Tonga Islands. It is such a cave in one of the islands of the Fiord that Miss Martineau describes as the shelter of Rolf in her story of *Feats on the Fiord*, and I might give many more instances of this trick of Nature. The probability is that a cave of this kind was known to the people who composed the lay of Beowulf's battle with Grendel's mother; and the waves, in such a place as the poem describes, would be likely to hollow out a cavern of this fashion. They have begun to do so, for instance, at Boscastle in Cornwall. All the statements in the account confirm this conjecture. Beowulf and Grendel's dam, close embraced, dive *upwards* into the cave. When they get in they are in "a sea hall where the water is not." On the walls of the cave are hung weapons; there is a rocky couch in it, and treasures lying about; and the fight is conducted on the dry sand, under a lofty roof. There is firelight, but I think, when we look at all that is said of this light, the writer meant that the light was like fire, and that in reality he thought of the pale daylight that filtered through the rocks above. "He saw firelight, a brilliant beam brightly shining," that is the first statement, and it is a touch which belongs to the story of Grettir's attack on the Giant in the cave under the force. Then when he looks round after he

roofed cavern brightly shining; and Beowulf struck at the mere-woman. The ringed blade sang a greedy war-song on her head. But the war-beam would not bite — for the first time — into the flesh of its foe, and the hero flung it, angry, on the floor, and trusted to his grip alone. The sea-wolf seized him in her fierce grasp, and, as he stumbled, overthrew him, sat on his breast, and drew her short sword, the seax, broad and brown-edged, and stabbed at his heart. But his war-sark, the battle net, lent help to him, and withstood the blow. He leaped to his feet and looking round him saw among the arms hanging on the wall a sword, hallowed by victory, an old sword of the eotens, doughty of edges, greater than another could wield in the war-play, a pride of warriors. He seized the gold-charmed hilt and smote at her neck therewith. The brand gripped on her throat, broke the bone-rings, pierced through her body; she fell on the floor. The blade was bloody, Beowulf rejoiced in his work. A light, a beam streamed into the cave, and was in it as when from heaven brightly shines the candle of the firmament. Again he looked round, and lifted his weapon, and there by the wall lay Grendel, dead, weary of war. The body sprang far away when the hero smote off its head.[1] All the blood streamed into the water; and the thegns of Hrothgar, sitting on the shore, and it was near the ninth hour, saw that the waves were mingled with blood. "We shall not see him again," they said, and took their way back to Heorot. But Beowulf's own thegns remain, sick in their mind, wishing, not hoping, to see their dear lord again. While they waited, the giant's sword blade melted in Beowulf's hand, by reason of the "battle sweat of the icicles of war" (the blood droppings from its edge), so poisonous was the gore of the two monsters — melted, "likest to ice when the Father looses the band of frost, when he unwinds the ropes of the flood," and Beowulf took the hilt and Hrunting and Grendel's head, as he dived up through the cleansed seas, rejoicing in his sea-booty. The brave band were glad to see the seaman's Helm, and loosed his armour,

has slain the sea-wolf, he sees by the light Grendel lying dead on a rocky couch and the light is thus described — "A glancing light gleamed, a light stood within, even as from heaven serenely shines the candle of the firmament." This seems to mean daylight. But even had they firelight, it would not change my contention. We have here a cavern of which kind many known examples exist, and such a cavern was, I think, known to the poet. It marks especially the sea-nature of the Grendel-kin.

[1] *This* sword, then, could divide the charmed flesh of Grendel, being a magic sword. The fact that these monsters keep their own bane in their own dwelling, puts us in mind of many analogous examples in Folk-Tales.

and measured back the path to Heorot. Proudly they marched, and four men bore on spears the giant head of Grendel, entered Heorot, and flung it by the hair at the feet of Hrothgar and his queen. "So, son of Healfdene, we have brought thee this sea-spoil, which here thou beholdest." Then the tale of the fight was told, and the golden hilt of the Eoten sword given to the king.[1] He wondered as he saw it, for there on the guard of pure gold was written the origin of a combat in ancient times, and

> Rightly graven there, in the runic signs,
> It was set and said for (what King) the sword,
> At the first was forged. Finest it of steels;
> And with spotted snakes was the hilt entwined.
>
> *Beowulf*, l. 1695.

Then Hrothgar tells of King Heremod, who slaughtered his people, and gave no gifts. Not so will he act. "Go, honoured in war, to thy seat. There shall be many treasures common to us both, when morning comes." When the feast was over, "swart was the night-helm, dark o'er the warriors. The great-hearted rested till the black raven, blithe-hearted, welcomed the joy of Heaven." The sun arose; "brightly it came, o'er the shadows sliding." Then Beowulf and Hrothgar took leave of each other and declared a firm alliance of Scylding and Geat, "after old custom doing all things. Hrothgar kissed and wept over Beowulf, and love of the hero glowed in his blood. Long was his gift-giving praised among men."

So Beowulf departed, and marching over the grassy plain, found beyond the ridge his ship anchored to the beach, and the warden of the coast on guard. To him the hero gave a sword, with gold wires round the hilt of it, and for that gift the warrior was ever after more honoured at the mead. In the hollow bosom of the ship, under the mast, the treasures, arms, and horses were stowed away, and the next day the adventurers landed on their own coast, where Hygelac dwelt near the sea-wall in a noble hall. The customs in that hall are much the same as those in Heorot. There does not seem, however, to be any dais at the east end of the building. The king sits in the middle of the long bench on the south side, and Beowulf oppo-

[1] "It went to the noblest of the world kings of the two seas, of those who in Scedenig treasure divided," line 1685. This supports the theory, I think, of the continental origin of this lay. *Scedenig* is the O. N. Scân-ey, the southernmost part of the Scandinavian peninsula and the whole of the Danish kingdom.

site him on the northern side. In this hall the queen, Hygd, does not sit with the king, as Wealhtheow among the Danes appears to do when the supper begins. Hygd comes in during the feast and bears the mead-cup round. Beowulf is then called on for his tale. He tells it from the beginning, and orders the treasures given him by Hrothgar to be brought into the hall. He gives everything away except one horse and the sword. The gray coat of mail he bestows on his lord Hygelac, crying, "Use it well," and four of the eight horses Hrothgar had given him. Three more of the horses, slender and of bright saddles, he gives to Hygd, and above all, the great and glorious collar, like the Brising collar, which Hygelac loses afterwards when he is slain in Friesland. Hygelac is not backward in return of gifts. He gives to Beowulf a sword enriched with gold, seven thousand in money, a country seat, the dignity of a prince.[1] It is now, then, that Beowulf, when he is thirty years old, seems to have attained a settled position — heritable land, a home and its rights. With this interchange of gifts the first part of the poem closes.

The second part of the poem of *Beowulf* opens fifty years later, and is the tale of Beowulf's fight with the Fire-Drake, and of his death and burial. The history of those fifty years is soon told. On his return from his slaying of Grendel he had been Hygelac's faithful thegn. Always on foot, and in the front, in the clashings of battle, and also in peace, he had never failed his lord. But most of all he was true comrade in the last fight, when Hygelac fell in combat with the Frisians and the Hugs. He could not save his king, but he avenged him on Daeghrefn, the champion of the Hugs, and in the same way as he slew Grendel. "I slew him!" cries Beowulf, "not with the sword, but in battle I grasped the throbbing of his heart, and broke his bone-house." Nor was he wounded himself, but, carrying off thirty war-harnesses,[2] went down to the sea, unpursued, so great was the terror of him, and swam (*i.e.* sailed) home with his old swimming skill over the seal's bath, to bring the news to Hygd, the wife of Hygelac. And Hygd, thinking her son Heardred too young for so many enmities, offered the throne to Beowulf. But the hero refused, faithful to his master's son, and brought him up and loved him and maintained him. But in vain, for Heardred fell, murdered by

[1] *Brego-stol*, "a throne," hence "rule." When Hygd, after Hygelac's death, offers Beowulf the kingly power, it is *brego-stol* which she offers him.

[2] This touch illustrates the way in which additions were made to a folk-tale. Beowulf has the strength of thirty men in the original tale. Here, then, the new inventor makes him carry off thirty coats of mail.

Eanmund. Beowulf then became king, and when he was settled, remembered vengeance and slew Eadgils, the brother of Eanmund, slayer of Heardred.

Noble, valorous, unconquered, he had outlived every enmity and every conflict, and dwelt, worshipped by his people, at peace, until when he was near his eightieth year the dragon came to spoil his folk. This was his final weird. We hear how the fate arose. One of his thegns found the secret barrow where the dragon's hoard was hidden, and stole a gold cup while the monster slept.

The account given of the building of this barrow and the hiding of the treasures in it is very romantic, and is either a legend used by the writer or is invented entirely by him. The lament of the prince reads like a separate piece of poetry which has been inserted by the singer. Portions of it resemble the fragment of the *Ruined Burg*, and the poetical quality of this little lyric, which might be quite isolated from the rest of the poem, is as good as that of the Ruin. As wild and desolate too as the scenery in which it is placed, is the short story which leads up to the lament of the prince. Three hundred years ago, in Hygelac's land, this prince dwelt with his nobles. A great war, a life-bane, took away his folk, and of all, none at last was left but he. "Mourning his friends," he wandered to and fro alone, "and wished for delay of death," even then, that he might enjoy the precious treasures, the last legacy of a noble race. But when he felt death at hand, he brought together all the costly things, gold cups and rings, treasured jewels, helms and swords, a golden banner, great dishes and old giants' work, and hid them in a huge mound, low by the headland near the moving of the waves, and sung over them his lament —

"Hold thou here, O Earth, now the heroes could not,
Hold the wealth of earls! Lo, within thee long ago
Warriors good had gotten it. Ghastly was the life-bane
And the battle-death that bore every bairn away.
All my men, mine own, who made leaving of this life!
They have seen their joy in hall! . . . .
None is left the sword to bear,
Or the cup to carry, chased with flakes of gold,
Costly cup for drinking. All the chiefs have gone elsewhere.
Now the hardened helm, high-adorned with gold,
Of its platings shall be plundered! Sleeping are the polishers,
Those once bound to brighten battle-masks (for war).
So alike the battle-sark that abode on field, (stricken)
O'er the brattling of the boards, biting of the swords,

Crumbles, now the chiefs are dead! And the coat of ringèd mail
May far and wide no longer fare with princes to the field
At the side of heroes. Silent is the joy of harp,
Gone the glee-wood's mirth; nevermore the goodly hawk
Hovers through the hall; the swift horse no more
Beats with hoof the Burh-stead. Bale of battle ruinous
Many souls of men sent away, afar."
So, in spirit sad, in his sorrow he lamented,
All alone when all were gone — Thus unhappy, did he weep
In the day and night, till the Surge of Death
On his heart laid hold. *Beowulf*, ll. 2247, etc.

This is the hoard over which the dragon watches. The Worm and the place are both accurately described, and it is fitting that we should collect what is said of both, first of the worm, and then of the place. This dragon story is not, like that of Grendel, unique. There are a multitude of parallels to it in the Folk-Tales, and the most famous of these is the story in the Volsunga Saga. But the drake in *Beowulf* is not the huge earth-worm like Fafnir. That beast is found in our poem at line 887. He is there the guard of the hoard, and lives, like our present dragon, under a hoary rock, a wondrous spotted worm; and when he is slain, his own heat melts him away; like the chimaera, nothing of him is left. He, like the Volsunga Fafnir, is wingless, for it seems that men who became dragons had, as dragons, no wings.

The Fire-Drake here is the true dragon, our old Romance acquaintance, whose breath is fire, whose wings are strong (the wings mark the dragon proper), and who has feet and claws in front. At least it appears as if in the fight he threw his fore-feet around Beowulf's neck. But he is also scaleless, naked, and Beowulf's sword and knife pierce his flesh, though the sword breaks on the bones of his head. Like many another dragon in Folk-Tales, he is a seeker, a finder, and a keeper of hidden treasures, of which he is proud, and which he guards with jealous covetousness. He lies round them in a cave, as Fafnir, like a Python, lay coiled over his hoard. So constant was this habit among the dragons, that gold is called Worms' bed; Fafnir's couch, Worms' bed-fire. Even in India, the cobras, especially their king, are guardians of treasure. Three hundred years before Beowulf met the drake, that beast, — so old is he (and great age is a characteristic of the dragons), — flying by night, and wrapt in his own fiery breath, had found the ancient hoard. All day he watches it now in the hollow of the barrow under the hill, or sleeps around it. Probably he was not yet long enough to quite encompass it, since the gold

cup is stolen from him, and there is evidence in the poem that the thief got in between his head and his tail (ll. 2289–2290), and I have somewhere else seen a folk-tale in which this element of the dragon story appears, and where, owing to this gap, the hoard is robbed by a peasant. He is, however, fifty feet in length. He moves on the earth, hunts his foe by scent, smells round his cave; hunts also by sight, and finds the footsteps of the robber near the cavern. He is once called the Earth-Drake, a name I have not elsewhere seen. But the air is also his proper element. He flies in it, and is called the wide-flier, the deadly lift-flier, the war-flier. But it is always by night that he flies. He is the old foe who comes out in the twilight; before day dawns he returns to his cave. In this he is quite unlike those dragons who sun their gold in fine weather. But our dragon is wholly of the night. It is said of him: "Who, all on fire, seeks to the mountains, naked, full of hate, flying through the night enfolded in flame; whom the earth-dwellers gazed at from far," and it is a fine touch of description. Fire, then, as well as earth and air, is in his power. Fire is his very nature; he goes forth with burning, winged with flame. Fire is his weapon; when he is robbed, he longs to take vengeance by fire, but he must wait till nightfall. Then he rushes from the cave, and rising in the air, spits forth gleeds, and the hate he feels intensifies the glow. When he comes forth to fight, he breathes hot and venomous fire, the hot sweat of battle; it wells from his breast. His breath of fire enwraps him, so that he seems embroidered with gouts of flame. The steam of his breathing is like the hot gore of battle; earth resounds as he moves over it. In the crisis of the fight he gathers in his breath till his breast swells, and pours a welter of flame on Beowulf, flinging it far and wide. Finally, he can make himself into a bow, or like a ring; he rolls along in curves when he comes out of his lair. Like so many dragons then, splendour and pliability mark him; and "glitter, gold and fire," as Grimm says of other worms, gather round his presentation. Moreover, he lives close to the desolate and hoar heath that runs inland from his cavern, and the wild heath is the constant companion of the northern and gold-guarding dragons. A dragon is called a heath-worm. The "fani-gold" is gold of the fen in the heath where dragons lie. It is on the "glistening heath" that Fafnir has his den, and the *haeðen* gold of *Beowulf* may mean gold of the heath as well as heathen gold. This then is the image of the great beast, whom the hero, like Hercules, Apis, Jason, Sigmund, Sigurd, Frotho, and a hundred others, lays to sleep; by whose

breath he dies, like Thor by the breath of the Midgard serpent.[1]

The poet not only describes the beast, he enables us to place him. The scenery and his refuge may be conceived with clearness from many indications in the poem. The Nesses rise one after another along the coast, with dips of land beneath them. The loftiest of these is called Hrones-naes the Whale's Ness; next to it is Earna-naes the Sea-Eagles' Ness.[2] The cliff-face descends between these in a scoop, and the meadowy space between the two Nesses is walled in on either side by their lateral rocks. On the top of one of these ridges is a grove of trees. Close to these trees, on the edge of the rock wall, and looking over to the opposite rocks where the worm has his shelter, Beowulf sits before he goes down to the meadow below to fight the dragon; on the same ridge his thegns watch the old king contending with the beast, and into the wood behind, all of them, save Wiglaf, fly in fear. It is on this side also that Beowulf, with his back to the cliff below, is driven to bay by the dragon. On the other side, but higher up the dell, nearer to the edge of the sea-cliff, whence the raging of the waves may be heard, the great barrow stands, built by the prince over the treasures and bodies of his tribe. Near it is the cave, entered into by a rocky arch, within which are the treasures and the lair of the worm. A stream breaks out of the mouth of the cave, and flows down the slope of the meadow, to lose itself in

[1] There is another picture of a dragon in Anglo-Saxon literature which I may as well insert here for the sake of comparison. It is in the Fifty-Second Riddle of Cynewulf. The beast he conceives has two resemblances to the *Beowulf* dragon. He is a swift flier in the air, and a guardian of treasure. But a new touch is added by Cynewulf. This dragon dives into the waves and disturbs the sea. Like the dragon of *Beowulf*, he has paws with which he walks the earth. These are the four wondrous beings with which the riddle begins—

> Four beings I saw, strange was their fashion,
> Travelling together: their foot-tracks were black,
> Very swart was their spoor.

Then the riddle changes from plural to singular, from the feet of the dragon to the dragon himself—

> Swifter than the swallows, swimming quickly in the air!
> In the deep, he dived, dashed it into foam,
> Like a fighting warrior; then he showed the ways
> O'er flaked heaps of gold, to all the four beings.

"Dashed it to foam" is, literally, behaved himself stormily in it, and the last lines mean that the dragon led his four feet to the place where the gold lay, each piece of it piled in a heap, overlapping the other like plates of iron on a stitched coat of mail.

[2] It is suggested that the name may be connected with Rân, the giant goddess of the sea, the daughter of Ægir — Ran's Naes; but with Earna-naes immediately following, the unmythological explanation is plainly right.

the gray heath and moor-land. This is the place, and when the dragon is slain, his carcase is pushed over the cliff to fall on the beach below, while Beowulf's body is borne upwards for burial to the point of Hrones-naes.

It was from this hidden and lonely dell that the dragon, when he awoke and found he was robbed, went forth at night for vengeance, vomiting gleeds. The palace hall was devoured by the flame. It was the "greatest of sorrows — the sacred gift-stool of the Geats was destroyed." But the fire of battle did not blaze less hot in Beowulf than of old, and he said he would alone, not with a host, go forth in his old age to meet the worm. So he let an iron shield be made, for a forest-wood — a wooden shield — would be burned up by the breath of fire; and with thirteen men (the thirteenth is the thief of the cup who alone knows the way) went to the ness opposite the cave and sat thereon, and Wyrd was very nigh him. Like an Indian chief, he sang his death-song, recounting his life, and deeds of war. "I all remember, since I was seven years old." He bids his thegns farewell, takes his shield and war-mail, not naked now as he strove with Grendel, because he has to fight with fire. "Not one foot will I fly the Ward of the hill; but at the rock-wall it shall be as Wyrd wills, Wyrd the measurer of each man's life. Wait ye on the hill, clad in your byrnies. Then the fierce champion, brave under helm, beneath the stone cliffs bore on his mail-sark." And he saw, by the rock-wall, an arch of stone standing and a stream from under it break from the mountain; the flood of that burn was hot with battle-fire, for it was aflame with the breath of the Fire-Drake. Enraged, the king shouted; stark of heart, his cry was like a storm. "His shout, clear sounding in battle, entered in under the gray stone. Then the hoard-ward knew the voice of a man." And first rolled forth the monster's fiery breath — hot sweat of battle, and the earth roared. The lord of the Geats upraised his shield, standing with his back against the steep rock, and the worm, rolling in curves and burning, moved forth to the fight. Beowulf swung up his hand and smote the grisly head with his sword, but the brown edge slid off on the bone, bit too feebly on it, for Wyrd did not permit him victory, and in a moment the king was wrapt in whirling fire. Again they met, and the fire was worse than before, nor was there any who helped the hero. All of his thegns, looking on, fled to the wood in terror — all save one. Wiglaf alone, whose breast welled with sorrows as he looked, Wiglaf, Weohstan's son, one of the Waegmundings, kinsman of Beowulf, remem-

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WITHDRAWN

bered the land, the folk-rights Beowulf had given him, and seized the fallow shield, and gripped his ancient sword (Onela had given it him, a giant's sword it was), and cried to his companions — "We promised, drinking mead in the hall with our lord, that we would repay him with help in need. Dearer far it is to me that flame should clasp me along with my gold-giver than that we should bear home our shields in safety." Then through the deadly reek he waded, and stood beside the king. "Well-loved Beowulf!" he cried, "as long since in thy youth thou saidst thy Honour should never fail, so now strong in deeds, ward thy life. I will stand by thee." Wiglaf's shield was soon burnt up, but he fought on under Beowulf's iron targe. The king smote hard again, but Naegling, Beowulf's sword, snapped asunder, an old gray brand, that never before had failed in battle,[1] at which the Drake rushed on and clasped the hero round the throat, and the king's life-blood bubbled forth in waves. Now Wiglaf struck lower, and his sword dived into the dragon so that the fire abated. Then Beowulf drew his deadly knife, bitter and battle-sharp, the seax that he wore on his byrnie, and cut in twain the worm through the middle. Thus the battle ended.

But in the poisonous grapple the king had got his death wound. It began to burn and swell and the venom boiled in his breast. So he sat down, wisely thinking, and looked on the giant's work, and how the stone arches of the cave were fast on the pillars, while Wiglaf washed his wounds and unloosed his helm. And then he spoke, and the whole scene has a dim likeness in it to the death of Arthur, as human, as pathetic —

"Now to some son of mine I would give this Warweed, had it so been granted to me that an heir, sprung from my loins,

[1] There is a curious passage introduced here by some late editor. Naegling, which may mean Nailer, the sword which drives like a nail into the foe — or perhaps with jewelled nails in the hilt (Nagelring, in the Wilkina saga, is the best sword in the world, and is a part of the ancient story of Angerboda) — breaks, the writer says, because the hand that swayed it was too strong for the sword. This is absurd, for Beowulf had fought with it all his life. But the intrusion of the detail here is done by some one who had heard of the legendary Offa and of his fight.

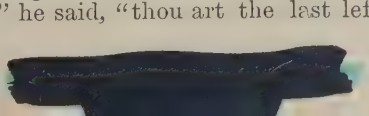
The legend goes that Offa, getting ready for his island duel at Fifeldor in defence of his blind father Wermund, broke all the swords that were given him when he waved them in the air — so mighty was his strength. At last Wermund reminded him of a magic sword that long since he had hidden in the earth. So bitten with rust and worms and thin was Skrep, for that was the sword's name, that Offa feared to break it and forbore to fight with it in the battle. At last, angry, he raised it and struck, and Wermund was saved from despair by hearing the hiss with which Skrep cut his enemy in half, from helm to thigh.

should come after me. Fifty of winters I held my sway over this people; nor was there one folk-king of them all, of all who sat on their lands around me, who durst greet me with their war-friends, to press on me with the terror of war. I tarried at home on the hour of my fate; I held my own fitly; I sought out no feuds; I swore not many oaths and kept them not; so may I for all this, though sick with deadly wounds, have comfort, since the Master of men is not bound to charge me with murder-bale of kinsmen when out of my body life takes its flight." It is an English death, and in the same temper many an English soldier has passed away. Nor is his desire to see the treasure less natural to our nation, less characteristic. "Now hasten, Wiglaf beloved," he adds, "and view the hoard beneath the hoary rock; bring it here that I may see the ancient wealth, the bright and cunningly-set gems, so that I may, all the easier, after the sight of it, give up my life and my peopleship that I have held so long."

Wiglaf hurries to the cave, and he beheld marvels there; glittering gold lying in the den of the worm, vessels of old time, pitchers and cups, plates and precious swords and helmets, eaten through and worn with rust, curiously wire-enwoven armlets, a sword iron-edged, and, greatest of wonders, an all-golden banner at rest, high over the hoard, curious handiwork woven with magic songs, and from it shone so mystic a light that Wiglaf saw by its gleaming all things in the cave. Then he loaded himself with the treasure and came forth to find Beowulf bleeding away his life, sprinkled him again with water, showed him the treasure to cheer him, until the last words of the old king, gazing sadly on the golden store, broke from his breast. "I thank the Glory-king for these treasures that here I stare on, for that I, ere I die, have won them for my people, have paid my own old life for them. But do thou supply the need of my folk; I may no longer be here."

> "Bid the battle-famed build a barrow up,
> Clear to see when Bale is burnt, on the cliff above the surge;
> Which may for my folk, for remembering of me,
> Lift its head on high on the Hrones-ness;
> That sea-sailing men, soon in days to be,
> Call it 'Beowulf's Barrow,' who, their barks afoam,
> From afar are driving o'er the ocean mists."
>
> *Beowulf*, l. 2802.

Then he did off from his neck the golden ring and gave it to Wiglaf, also his gold-wrought helm and collar and byrnie. "Use them well," he said, "thou art the last left of our kin



dred, of the Waegmundings. Wyrd swept them all away, each at the fated hour; earls in their strength. I must go after them." This was the last word of the old man, the "last of the thoughts of his heart." And as Wiglaf sat there mourning, the thegns who had been untrue to their lord, and fled when they should have helped, came stealing down from the holt where they had refuged, and, ashamed, gazed at Wiglaf and their king. Wearied he sat, near his lord's shoulders, and reproached them bitterly; and the deep disgrace it was for an English warrior to fail through cowardice in the duties of comradeship is nowhere better set forth than in the following speech —

"This, in sooth, one may say, who has a mind to speak the truth, that the Man-lord who gave fair things to you, the bright weeds of war in which here ye stand; when at the ale-bench he allotted helm and byrnie to the sitters in hall (as a war-leader to his thegns, whom far off or near, the trustiest of men he was able to find) — has utterly wasted these weeds of the battle. When War met him, the king of the folk had no cause to boast of his comrades in arms. . . . Too few of those who should ward him pressed round their Lord when the stress of fight came upon him."

> " Now shall getting gems, giving too of swords,
> And the pleasure of a home, and possession of the land,
> Be no more to kin of yours; and each man of that kindred
> Must bereft of land-right roam, when the lords shall hear
> From afar (of all your fear), of your flight (to-day),
> Of your deep disgrace. Death is better far
> For whatever warrior than a life of shame!"
>
> *Beowulf*, l. 2864.

I have translated this passage for its historic value. It equals the passage in Tacitus which describes the tie of chief to companion and companion to chief among the Germans, and which recounts the shame that fell on those who survived their lord.

The news of the death of the king is now carried to the host who waited on the sea-edge the issue of the fight. The messenger describes what he has seen, and then (relating in an episode, which I have elsewhere spoken of, the blood-feud between themselves and the Sweons) predicts that the Sweons will come and harry them now that Beowulf is dead. There are treasures where he lies, but none shall wear them in memory of the dead, neither warrior nor maiden fair; and with the word he thinks again of the fates of war that over

hung them because "the leader of their battle has ceased from laughter, from sport and singing joy." Therefore shall the maidens, sad of mood, of gold bereft, not once, but often, tread an alien land.

> Many a one, now morning-cold,
> Lifted in the hands (of ghosts);
> With its clanging wake the warriors,
> Fiercely-eager o'er the fated,
> To the earn shall say
> When he with the wolf
> Therefore shall the spear,
> be by fingers met around,
> and the Harp shall never more
> but the Raven wan,
> shall be full of talking,
> how it sped him at the gorging,
> on the war-stead robbed the slain.
>
> *Beowulf*, l. 3021.

This is a finer use than usual of the common poetic attendants of a battle, the wolf, the eagle, and the raven. The three are here like three Valkyrie, talking of all that they have done; and I have elsewhere said that the wild note that fills the passage is repeated centuries after in the ballad of the *Two Ravens*.

Then all the host rose and went, weeping, to see the king where he lay, under the Ness of the Sea-Eagle, and the poet (whose work is here not a little spoiled by later insertions) paints the scene so that we see it with our eyes. They found the giver of rings dead, outstretched upon the meadow, and Naegling, his sword, broken by his side, and the Fire-Drake, scorched with his own gleeds, fifty feet of him, on the fire-blackened and blood-stained ground. They saw the rocky arch above the cave, and the stream that rushed from it, and Wiglaf, seated on a stone in that grassy place, near his dear lord, and the shamed cowards standing by, and, in the midst of all, shining as if in mockery, golden cups and bowls scattered on the grass, rings and jewels, "swords that had lain a thousand winters, it seemed, in the lap of earth, so rusty, eaten through" were they; and above them, as fitted a dead hero, as was the honour of Scyld when he died, the golden banner glistened.

Add to this the picture of the host descending into the hollow between the cliffs, and gathering round their king, and we see the whole as the poet meant us to behold it. Wiglaf tells them how bravely the battle was fought; how impossible it was to hold back the prince from dying for his folk; how he had seen the cave and the golden things and borne them forth to Beowulf while he was yet alive. "He bade me greet you, and prayed you to make a high barrow for him on the cliff. Let the bier be made ready, and I will show you the

wonders of the hoard." Seven went with him, and one bore a lighted torch. Little was left in the cave, but they bore it forth, laded a wain with the wrought gold, heaved the dragon over the cliff, and carried the hoar-headed warrior to the point of Hrones-naes.

Now the gleed shall fret —
And the wannish flame wax high on the War-strength of the warriors,
Him who oft awaited iron showers in the fight,
When the storm of arrows, sent a-flying from the strings,
Shot above the shield wall, and the shaft its service,
Fledged with feathers, did, following on the barb.

Beowulf, l. 3114.

So cried Wiglaf in his pride and sorrow; and they burned their king, as I have told at the beginning; and then they made his barrow and sang his death-song.

Then the Weder-folk worked upon that place,
On the hanging cliff, a howe that was high and broad,
By the farers on the waves far and wide to be descried;
And within a ten of days they uptimbered there
Of the Battle-fierce the beacon; and the best of Brands[1]
With a wall they wrought around, as most worthily (his men),
All the men of wisest mind, might imagine it.
Then they did into the barrow armlets and bright gems,
And the precious things of price, all that from the hoard
The high-hearted men late had heaved away;
Let the earth hold fast of the earls the treasure,
Gold within the grit-wall; where it now abideth,
Of as little use to men as of old it was.
Then about the barrow rode the Beasts of battle,
Twelve in all were they, bairns of Æthelings,
Who would speak their sadness, tell their sorrow for their king.

So with groaning sorrowed all the Gëat folk,
All his hearth-companions, for their house-lord's overthrow;
Quoth they that he was, of the world-kings all,
Of all men, the mildest, and to men the kindest,
To his people gentlest, and of praise the keenest.

Beowulf, l. 3157.

With these words of pathetic farewell *Beowulf* closes; and I think that this carefully-wrought conclusion, and this retrospective summary of the hero's character, go far to prove, however many ballads and lays may have been used by the writer, that the poem was composed as a whole, with one aim, by one poet.

[1] *Bronda betost.* I do not think I can allege any authority for translating *Brond* here as a title of Beowulf. But the O. N. *Brand-r* a sword, often means a warrior, as the German *Degen* does. And we use the term "a good sword" for a good fighter. I have let the translation remain, but otherwise it would be "the best, the most famous of Burnings."

CHAPTER IV

THE EPISODES OF "BEOWULF," AND THE "FIGHT AT FINNSBURG"

The episodes in the poem of *Beowulf* are sufficiently important to deserve separate treatment. One of them is connected with the *Fight at Finnsburg*, a distinct fragment of heathen English poetry; and this fragment is included in this chapter. Another, the first episode, is the story of Scyld and his burial, but this belongs so plainly to the mythical elements in the poem that I reserve it for the chapter on those elements.

I begin, therefore, with the second episode which is that of Beowulf's swimming match with Breca. On the evening of his arrival at Hrothgar's court, Beowulf is mocked by the jealousy of Hunferth, who is the king's feast-companion. "Art thou that Beowulf who strove with Breca in swimming, risking your lives in the deep water, when winter's flood weltered with great billows? Seven nights ye strove, and he conquered thee in swimming." Beowulf answered, full of wrath, that Hunferth was a liar, and that the victory was his, not Breca's. He describes his adventure, his battle with the sea-monsters, his coming to the land.[1] The interest of the story lies in this — that even if the story be mythical, it is coloured by the sea-life of our ancestors or of their northern kindred. Many were the young men in the ancient days who challenged one another to go forth in winter time upon the sea to fight

[1] There are those, of whom Laistner is the most minute, who turn the whole of this Breca and Beowulf story into a Nature myth. "Beowulf, who is a wind hero" (the cloud-cleanser, for Laistner makes Beowa = der Feger, and Wolf = Nebel), "is in this story of Breca, the spring-wind. Breca is *der Brecher*, who rules over the Brondings, that is, the sons of the flaming brand, and is himself a son of Beanstan who stands for *Bohnstein*, the sun. His swimming wager with Beowulf through the wintry sea, in the teeth of the icy northern storm, means 'the sun and the wind fight with the winter.'" This is the most interesting of the mythical explanations of the story. There are many others, but they are easily imagined and easily invented.

with whales and great seals and the walrus.[1] Five nights Beowulf and Breca kept together, not swimming, but sailing in open boats (to swim the seas is to sail the seas), then storm drove them asunder when they were near the land — some indented coast where the sea-beasts had their haunt. "Flood

[1] I may as well introduce here in a note two verses and a half of Anglo-Saxon poetry, which belong to that early time when Christianity and Heathendom were still somewhat interwoven. They are supposed to be of the eighth century, and they refer to some whale or walrus hunt on the sea-coast. The lines seem apart from the English type of poetry, and I should conjecture that they were carved much later by some Englishman who had been roving with the Northmen, and who, perhaps by way of the Mediterranean, came to France, and left his casket behind him. This inference is suggested by the history of the lines.

They are cut in runes on the side of a casket made of whale or walrus bone, and they record the closing event of the hunt. On another of its sides is the rude carving of a scene (as Bugge has shown) out of the Weland saga. A woman, Beadohild, comes to Weland; the body of her murdered brother lies at her feet, and another man, Egil, Weland's brother, catches birds that Weland may make his feather-garment for his flight. Over his head *Egili* may be traced, written in runes. The casket was found, as well as conflicting evidence will allow us to judge, in the sacristy of a church at Clermont-Ferrand in Auvergne. Thence it came into possession of a family in Auzon, Haute-Loire, and was used as a work-basket. The silver bands were removed from it, and it fell into pieces. In this state it was bought at Paris from an antiquarian dealer by Franks, who gave it to the British Museum The next thing to say is that the maker not only knew the Weland saga, but was also a Christian, for on the side opposite the scene from the saga is carved the birth of Christ, and the worship of the Magi. In runic writing near the three men the word Magi is cut. Stephens identified the carving on the top and the sides of the casket as the Taking of Jerusalem, the Beheading of John the Baptist, and the Suckling of Romulus and Remus by the Wolf. It is plain that these identifications are disputable. If the Latin wolf-story be really represented, it suits my conjecture that the writer was a Northumbrian who went with a Viking to the Mediterranean. One side, long lost, has now, I am told, been found, and is said to represent part of the Siegfried story.

Here are the lines, with my translation —

Hronaes ban
Fiscflodu ahof on ferg(enbyrig);
Warþ gasric grorn, þaer he on greut giswom.

[This] bone of the whale
Up-heaved the fish-floods to a fortress of waters;
Sore the sea wailed, when he swam o'er the shingle.

The lines have been translated in many different fashions; and we owe to Mr. Sweet the explanation of *gasric* by *garsecg*, which makes the last line clear. But he makes *fiscflodu* the subject and *ban* the object. "The fish-flood lifted the whale's bones on to the mainland." Wülker has shown, as I think, the impossibility of this translation. *Flodu* is a neuter plural, and must be the object after *ahof* and *ban* the subject. The whale's bone he takes to mean the whole whale, and translates "the whale heaved up the fish-floods." *Ferg-(enbyrig)* has also its difficulty; and Sweet translates it by "the mainland"; but, again, Wülker seems right when he translates it *wasserburg, meeresburg. Fergen, firgen,* frequently means "water, the sea," and *fergen byrig* would be "a sea like a fortress." Wülker does not, however, ask himself what the writer of the runes *saw* when he was writing them, nor is there any need for the harsh taking by him of the bone of the whale for the whole body of the

drove us apart," said Beowulf, and the whole description breathes of the Northern seas —

> Wallowing waters, coldest of weathers,
> Night waning wan; while wind from the North,
> Battling-grim, blew on us; rough were the billows.
> *Beowulf*, l. 546.

A great sea-beast attacks him, he is drawn out of the boat into the sea, and plunges to the bottom with the foe; but he stabs him to the heart, and rises again amidst the herd. It is plain the fight takes place near to the land, for the dead are lying on the sea-strand in the morning, "put to sleep by swords." Beowulf slays nine of the nickers, "so that never again they shall hinder the journey of those that fare upon the sea." Then the sun arose —

> From eastward came light,
> Bright beacon of God; the billows grew still;
> So that now I could see the sea-nesses (shine),
> The windy rock-walls! Wyrd often delivers
> An earl yet undoomed, if his daring avail. l. 569.

"Then the flood bore me up to the land of the Fins, worn with my voyage."

Whether this adventure actually belonged to Beowulf or got into his story from some other quarter, makes little matter. Breca, who is in the tale a young fellow, is afterwards chief of the Brondings, a tribe mentioned in *Widsith*. The story seems legendary, not mythical; and the return of Breca to his home reads like a piece of Homer. When the sea had upborne him

whale. The story told in the lines, and I presume that it is the story told by the hunter of how he got the ivory of the casket, seems to be something like this —

The bone of the whale is the ivory jaw and teeth of the Sperm whale, a portion of which is here made into a casket. It is this, set in his mighty head, which lifts the sea in front of him as he rushes through it, into a piled-up heap of waters which, indeed, driven before him into a wide curve, would closely resemble the half circle of the outwork of a fortress; and many a time the whalemen have seen the animal carrying the sea in front of him in this fashion. Or, our casket-maker — and this explanation gives more meaning to the *ferg-(enbyrig)* — may have seen the whale broach headforemost into the air, bearing up with him, as it were, a castle of water, a mountainous burg of sea. Then he tells the rest of the story of his piece of ivory. The hunters drove the great beast shoreward, or of itself it got entangled in the shallows and reefs, and there it died on the shingle pierced with lances; but before it died all the shallow waters of ocean, lashed by its struggles, wailed and mourned.

If this be a true explanation, it is the rapid record of the hunt in which this very piece of ivory was secured; and it tells first of how the whale behaved in deep ocean, and then how it died in the shallows. Perhaps, for the sake of the vividness of the picture, and of seizing this bit of our fathers' sea-life clearly, this note is not too long. See Note at the end of this volume.

on the land of the Heathoraemas it is said, "Thence he sought his sweet home-land, beloved of his folk, the land of the Brondings, his fair city of peace, where he kept his people, his citadel, his treasure. So, in good sooth, did the son of Beanstan fulfil against thee (Beowulf) all the pledge that he had made." Some history lies at least in the names, and removes the tale from the region of pure myth. Moreover, this nicker story, and the description of the nickers that lie and sleep on the reefs around the sea-hole where Grendel lived, render it, I think, probable that the walrus and the greater seals lived in prehistoric times on the coasts of Norway and Sweden, and that out of them were created by the popular imagination the sea-monsters of mythology and legend.

The third episode is introduced in the description of the bard who, in the morning after Grendel's death, strives to compose with art a tale of Beowulf's exploit, so that he may sing it in the evening. Apparently he kindles himself up to this creative endeavour by reciting the saga of Sigemund the Waelsing. What we hear of it in *Beowulf* is quite different from the Norse or the German versions, and is probably the oldest literary form of the saga. It is not Sigurd or Siegfried the son of Sigmund, who destroys the worm (not here as yet named Fafnir), but Sigmund himself; and the bard at Hrothgar's court looked back on the story as an old one. He told what he "had heard men say of Sigemund's noble deeds, of much that was unknown, of the battles of the Waelsing, of the feuds and the crime, of his far journeys of which men knew nothing certainly, save Fitela (the Sinfiötli of the Edda), who was with him; for ever they were true comrades in all battles, and very many of the race of the eotens had they slain with swords. But to Sigemund came no little fame, and after his death it lasted, since the hero had slain the worm, the watcher of the hoard. He, going under the gray stone, alone had dared the dreadful deed. Fitela was not with him. Yet his sword drove through the wondrous worm, so that the noble iron stood fast in the wall of rock. There lay the dragon dead. The offspring of Waels enjoyed the hoard of rings. At his own will he bore into the breast of the ship the glittering treasures. The worm (so I read the meaning) melted in his own heat. Of wanderers he was the most widely famed among all people by deeds of strength; a shelter of warriors. For that in old time he had honour." This is all that is said in *Beowulf* about the Volsunga

Saga.[1] Whether the episode be as old, or older than the rest of the poem, cannot be said for certain, but it is worth while to put it clearly forth, so famous is the story; and the rude simplicity of the tale, undeveloped as yet into the two personages of Sigmund and Sigurd, makes for its antiquity. It pleases me to think that it is in English literature we possess the first sketch of that mighty saga which has for so many centuries engaged all the arts, and at last in the hands of Wagner the art of music.

The fourth episode is the story of Finn king of Friesland over-lord of Jutland[2] and of his sons, in battle with Hnaef and Hengest his lieutenant, and of the events which followed. It is sung at the feast in Heorot after the death of Grendel. That it was a well-known and popular lay is plain, not only because the bard sings but a portion of it, as if the rest were well known to his hearers, but also because we possess a fragment of another poem on the same subject, written also in English by another hand. Curiously enough this other fragment, which has been entitled the *Fight at Finnsburg*, supplies us with a part of the tale which is wanting in *Beowulf;* and I shall speak of it before I come to the related episode in *Beowulf.*

It seems that Finn, king of the North Frisians and of the Eotenas, *i.e.* of the Jutes, son of Folcwalda, was married to Hildeburh, daughter of Hoce the Dane and sister of Hnaef. Finn, angry with or jealous of the Danes, invited Hnaef to come and stay with him as guest (much as Ætla invites the Niblungs) with the intention of slaughtering him. Hnaef comes with sixty men, and his right-hand man was Hengest. They are lodged in a great hall in Finnsburg — Finn's town in Jutland,

[1] I have wondered if the phrase used about the treasure hid in the dragon's cave in lines 3069, 3072 may not be a late intrusion into the story from the Volsunga Saga, and related to the curse which attended on the hoard of the Niblungs.

[2] I follow Grein in the arrangement of this story; but it has been explained in many other ways. It is questioned whether this fragment relates the first battle with Finn (as in the story told above), or whether it is an account of the second battle in which vengeance is taken on Finn. It is questioned *who* is besieged in Finnsburg — Finn himself or his enemy? And it is questioned whether this fragment is part of a larger poem, or the lay of a single battle? Various have been the answers to these questions and the ingenuity of the theories is such that the main question — of what kind is the poetry? — somewhat disappears.

There was no doubt a Finn saga sung all over the coasts of the Northern Sea, with many stories built into it, and some of these may have been, in variant forms, carried on into later sagas. I do not think that this English fragment is a part of this larger saga, but that it is a separate lay, of which we have lost the beginning and the end.

— and at night, when all are asleep, Finn and his men surround the hall with fire and sword. It is at this point that the *Fight at Finnsburg* begins.

This fragment of fifty lines which, for the sake of form, I speak of here and not separately, is probably much of the same date as the early lays of Beowulf. It was discovered by Dr. George Hickes on the cover of a MS. of Homilies in the library at Lambeth Palace, and published by him in his *Thesaurus Linguarum Septentrionalium*. The leaf itself has been lost. We have only the copy Hickes made of it. It is a happy fortune which has selected so vigorous and picturesque an episode for preservation. The shout of Hnaef, aroused from sleep by the cry of the besiegers, his call to his comrades, the fierce and rapid speech of the warriors to one another, the challenges, the delight in war, have almost an Homeric manner, and we ought to have some pride when we think that verse of this direct and passionate character was written by men of our own race so many years ago.

Hnaef[1] had leaped to his feet "young and warlike," at the noise of the foe outside, and cried aloud —

This no eastward dawning is, nor is here a dragon flying,
Nor of this high hall are the horns a burning.

. . . . . .

But they rush upon us here; — Now the ravens sing,[2]
Growling is the gray-wolf, grim the war-wood rattles,
Shield to shaft is answering. Shining now the moon is,
Full the welkin under; now the woeful deeds arise,
Which will into making put all this malice of the folk!
But do ye awaken now, men of war of mine,
Have your hands a-ready, think on hero-deeds.
Fight ye in the front, be of fiery mood.

[1] Wülker thinks that this young fellow is Hengest and not Hnaef. In his opinion (and he follows others) the fight in this fragment is to be introduced between lines 1145, 1146 in *Beowulf*. Hnaef has already fallen, and it is Hengest who speaks. See for the rest of this view page 315 in the *Grundriss*.

[2] *Fugelas singaδ, gylleδ graeghama*, is often translated, "the birds sing, the cricket chirps," but the phrase seems to have no meaning. I think that Hnaef is declaring that war and fighting is come upon them, and he uses the well-known images of the bird and the beast of battle to tell his folk what is at hand. The *fugelas*, the "birds," would then mean the ravens whose song went with the hosts to war, and *gylleδ graeghama* would then be "the gray wolf (him of the gray cloke) is howling." Others, however, make *graeghama* mean the "gray war shirt," and *gylleδ* "is ringing," and this seems adopted by the best scholars. If so, I certainly would not retain the translation of *fugelas* as "birds," but take it metaphorically, and translate it "arrows" or "spears." Both, when flying through the air, are spoken of by the Anglo-Saxons as "adders of the battle," and I see no reason why they should not be called "birds." As to the spears singing, yelling through the air, that is a common phrase in ancient folk-poetry.

. . . . Then did many a thegn
Rise, begemmed with gold, girt him with his sword.
. . . .
And two lordly warriors went to guard the doors,
Sigeferth and Eaha, and their swords they drew.
At the other gates up-stood Ordlaf and Guthlaf,
And Hengèst himself. He strode upon their track.

Garulf and Guthhere, two other warriors, urge each other on, and a fierce hero cried aloud, "Who held the door?" And the answer came such as Ulysses might have given in his hall to Antilochus.

Sigeferth's my name, quoth he, I'm the Secga's lord,
Widely known, a wanderer; many woes I bore,
Battles hard to bear! Here is banned to thee
Whatsoever thou thyself will'st to seek on me.[1]

Then was at the wall wail of deadly battle,
Then the boat-shaped shield must the bone-helm break
In the hands of heroes. All the house-floor rang again;
Till amid the fight headlong fell Garulf—
He the earliest of all of these earth indwellers,
Son of Guthlaf— good men many fell about him.
High the heap of corses;[2] hovered there the raven,
Swart and sallow-brown; shone the gleam of swords,
As if all Finns-Burh were with fire aflame.
Never heard I that more nobly sixty heroes brave
Better bore themselves in the battle-strife of men.
Never since did swains of war better pay for sweetened mead
Than his house-carles then paid to Hnaef their due.
Five of days they fought and there fell of them,
Of his war men, none; but well they held the doors.

The few lines which follow seem to tell that their chief was at last wounded to the death. He said that his byrnie was broken, and his helm cloven, and he gave over the command to another. But no name is here mentioned, and we should not have known what happened were it not for the singer in Hrothgar's hall. He has taken up the story at the very point where the fragment of the *Fight at Finnsburg* drops it. We hear that it was Hnaef who was slain, and that Hengest, succeeding him, fought on until nearly all the men of Finn were slain, and among them Finn's sons by Hildeburh.

[1] This is a very doubtful translation, but I suggest it, and mean by it "The fate, whatever it may be, which thou thinkest to inflict on me, will be your own. You would slay me, I will slay you; that is determined for you." But it may be better to translate it more simply and literally "I have borne many woes, hard battles, which are again decreed here; which thou wilt seek with me."

[2] This is a guess at the meaning. There are a number of different readings.

It is a tragic position, such as is frequent in these Northern stories, and the woman dominates it. Hildeburh has lost her brother Hnaef at her husband's hands, and she has lost her sons who had fought against her brother. Peace is made between Hengest and Finn, pledges and blood-money taken; but the central point of passion in the singer's song is the grief of Hildeburh and the burning on one pyre of her brother's body with that of her son. No man could believe that this peace would last; too much of grief, anger, and brooding revenge is contained in the things done.

Hengest went with Finn to Friesland and spent the winter with him and Hildeburh. He remembered his land, but the "ocean rolled in storm, and the waves were locked with ice;" and he could not go. But when the winter was gone and the bosom of earth was fair, he "thought more of vengeance than of voyaging," and stayed on to slake his wrath. Finn knew it; and Hengest fell by the hand of Hunlafing.[1] Nor did the feud end there, for Guthlaf and Oslaf took up the quarrels of their dead chieftains Hnaef and Hengest, and gathering a host sailed away to Friesland. In turn, they attacked Finn in his hall, stormed it, and brought death-bringing sword-bale to him. All his high Burg was covered with the dead, and the Scylding Danes loaded their ships with his plunder. Moreover, they took Hildeburh (who, we may imagine, had wrought against her husband), and bore the royal woman back over the sea-road to the Danes, to her own people. It is but the outline of a story, but it is of that quality in the events which is capable of fresh development as singer after singer took up the theme. The situations are passionate, and the events; and every singer could refit them as he pleased and create new ones. It is a pity they did not get hold of it in Iceland, where they might have given it the form it so lamentably lacks at present.

Another story, the story of Heremod (not, I think, the mythic Heremod), was also in vogue when *Beowulf* grew into a poem, and was evidently used to point the moral of the duties of a king; a stock example of a bad chieftain. The tale is used in this fashion twice in *Beowulf*, and enables us to see one of the ways in which the bards filled up their subject when they sang. Heremod's shame is contrasted with the glory of Sigemund, and with the prudence, patience, generosity, and gentleness of Beowulf as a chieftain. But his wickedness caused him to be remembered, and he illustrates that type of

[1] This passage, lines 1143–1145, is otherwise explained. See Earle's note on the passage. *Deeds of Beowulf*. Clarendon Press.

man among the Northerns, of which there are examples in the Icelandic sagas, whom power and pride destroy through the indulgence of passion. Heremod slew all his servants till he was left alone in a joyless life; he gave no rings to men, and when his strength was decayed, he was betrayed to his foes.

The next episode is that of Thrytho, the wicked woman, as Heremod was the wicked king. She is contrasted (and her story is brought in for that purpose) with Hygd, the queen of Hygelac, young, wise, well-trained, and generous. No one dared look Thrytho in the eyes, save only her husband, and whoever did, paid for his courage, for she had him slain. She seems also to have compassed the death of her husband. But afterwards, driven by her father's counsel from her country, the mythic Offa married her and tamed her. But she was happy to be tamed, for great love held her for this prince of heroes. As a violent woman stained with crime, she stands alone in *Beowulf*.[1]

The women of *Beowulf* are of the fine Northern type; trusted and loved by their husbands and by the nobles and people; generous, gentle, and holding their place with dignity. They serve the heroes in hall with the mead, not as servants, but as doing honour to their friends. They, like the king, bestow gifts. At the king's death they are regents while their sons are young, and can dispose of the kingdom, as Hygd attempts to do. Wealhtheow is lady of the feast, and when Beowulf comes to her husband's help, is mindful of courtesies, and welcomes him. Her heart is pleased when the hero boasts of his prowess. When he has conquered Grendel, she is the first to speak to him at the feast. But she does all in order. First she speaks to her husband, then to his nephew Hrothulf, and claims the kindness of Hrothulf for her sons. Her motherhood is foremost in her heart. When she sees Beowulf sitting between her boys, she gives him a jewelled collar, and begs his friendly counsel for them. Her last words make clear that she is obeyed like her lord, and sketch in a moment the Teutonic tie of king to thegn, of people to their king.

[1] *Two* accounts seem to be given of her, one after another; two forms perhaps of the original saga. One represents her as a termagant even after her marriage, the other as mild and gentle after her union with Offa. The other explanation which gives her two different husbands and makes the whole story *one*, is given above in the text. Suchier finds parallels to the story in many other sagas. Thrytho has herself been compared with the historical Cyneþrið, the Drida of Matthew of Paris; and it is probable that this tale of Drida slipped into the legend of the Mercian Offa from the saga of Offa the Angle.

Here is every earl to the other true,
Mild of mood he is, true man to his lord,
All the thegns at one, ever eager are the people
Do as I demand of you, warriors drinking here!
Beowulf, l. 1228.

The other women are Hildeburh and Freaware. Of the first enough has been said in the Finn story to make us feel her character; of the second Beowulf speaks when he gives an account of his doings to Hygelac.

Nothing is said of her personally, but Beowulf's talk about her sets before us another episode intruded into the poem. It contains a position of affairs which we might easily match in the Icelandic stories.[1] There has been a desperate battle between Hrothgar the Dane Freaware's father, and Froda, King of the Heathobeardnas, in which Froda is slain. To appease the feud, Hrothgar gives his daughter to wife to Ingeld son of Froda, and it is owing to this custom of putting an end to wars by means of a marriage that women have in Northern poetry the name of "peace-weavers." Beowulf has not much hope that this peace will last, and the reason he gives illustrates the way a quarrel broke out again among our forefathers. "What will happen," he asks, "when Freaware, the Danish princess, comes into the hall of the Heathobeardnas, and they remember the slaughter of their folk that the Danes had made? What will happen when they see with her a son of the Danes wearing the sword of Froda?" The answer he gives has all the character of an extract from a separate saga inserted in this place.

The Prince of the Heathobeardnas and his people will take it ill, when Freaware steps into the hall, that the Danish prince who attends on her (one of her brothers, of whom seven sagas were written) should boast himself there of the spoils of the Heathobeardnas. On him gleams the heirloom of the old hero, his hard and ring-decked sword, a treasure of the Heathobeardnas. Then at the beer-drinking a gray spear-warrior will see the jewelled hilt, and remember him of the spear-death of Froda who carried it of old. Wrath will be in his soul; he will turn to Ingeld, the young chieftain at his side, and stir his war-fury with this word —

[1] This episode of Freaware and Ingeld the son of Froda may be compared with the saga of Ingellus in *Saxo Grammaticus*. That saga is worked up out of old Northern lays, and we have here a part of one of these. "When Withergyld was slain" is otherwise translated "where the indemnity, or the vengeance, failed." The phrase is on the next page.

Canst thou not, my friend, know at sight this sword,
Which indeed thy father into fighting bore,
Underneath his hosting-helm, in his latest hour?
Dear that iron was, where the Dane-folk murdered him!
Theirs was then the war-field, when Withergyld lay low,
After heroes' slaughter! Keen the Scyldings are!
Now of these same slaughterers here the son of one,
Prideful of his spoils, paces through the hall,
Yelps in triumph of the slaying, bears with him the treasured sword
That thyself of right should'st alone possess.

Beowulf, l. 2047.

Thus with bitter words he stirs up Ingeld, till the Lady's thegn, for that his father slew Froda, sleeps blood-stained after the biting of the bill, having paid the forfeit of his life; but the slayer escapes, knowing well the land. Then the sword-oaths on either side will be broken, both by Danes and by Heathobeardnas. Deadly hate will boil in Ingeld — though he has caused the death of the boasting Dane — and the love he had for Freaware will become cooler through the waves of care. Therefore, ends Beowulf, put no trust in that alliance![1] It is a vivid picture, and, as we read it, a whole troop of similar motives come flying to its side out of the Icelandic tales.

The other episodes are the death of Hygelac, the earlier events of Beowulf's life, the earlier wars of the Geats. Of these I have already given an account in the story of Beowulf's life. The manners of our forefathers, as the tale represents them, now remain to be noticed.

Of the customs of the men and women from whom we have descended, and of their types of character much has been told in the poem and in the episodes. We have seen them as kings and queens, and there is a certain grave stateliness about their bearing and speech, and about the ceremony with which they are approached. They are respected by, and they respect, their followers. Rank is duly observed, and it is fitting that kings and nobles know the rank, the ancestry and the renown of other kings and nobles in other countries. The tie that

[1] There is an allusion to this same story of Ingeld and Freaware and Hrothgar in the *Widsith*; and Beowulf's prediction (put, after the event, into his mouth to show his wisdom) was fulfilled. Ingeld *did* go to war with Hrothgar his father-in-law, to avenge his father's death. The warriors of the Heathobeardnas came sailing into the same fiord that Beowulf sailed into when he came to Heorot, landed, stormed over the hill, and attacked Hrothgar in his hall. But the king, though old, was still dreadful. Hrothulf, his nephew, whom we hear of in the poem, was faithful, and they stood bravely to their arms for the homestead. The Heathobeardnas were pushed back to the sea, and Ingeld was slain. The lines from *Widsith* tell us the story. "Hrothwulf and Hrothgar hewed down at Heorot the host of the Heathobeardnas. There they bowed the point of the sword of Ingeld."

knits the thegns — the comrades in war and feast — to the king and to each other is kept unbroken, and is the first of the duties of life. The breaking of it through cowardice or untruth is attended with mortal disgrace, with outlawry it may be, and brings dishonour on the families of the cowards. Extreme courtesy is the rule, rudeness such as Hunferth's the exception; and jealousy and drink, combined with a character which is itself violent even to slaying of his kinsmen, are carefully assigned as the causes of this rudeness. Hospitality and frank generosity, lavish gifts and their interchange are also rigorous duties of life. If they drink hard, we have seen that they also sing well. Poets are always at their feasts, and the playing of the harp; and singing and harp-playing are not only in the hands of professionals, if I may use the word. Every warrior is supposed to be capable of these arts. As to the hard-drinking, it has been, if we look into these Anglo-Saxon poems, much exaggerated. It does not seem that they drank as hard as the gentlemen of the eighteenth century in the British Isles. Frequently we find passages, not only here in these early poems, but afterwards, where the man who gets drunk is looked on with scorn and reproof. All this is very different from the traditional image of our English ancestors, which is still painted of them by some of our own writers, and by our neighbours over the channel. In Taine's *History of English Literature* his sketch of the early English folk is ridiculous. One would think that the ancestors of the French were less greedy, less drunken, less brutal, less vicious than those of the English; that they were more dignified, more loyal, of better manners, and of better laws, than the Teutonic folk. The contrary was the case; and as to literature, the forefathers of the French had none which time has considered worthy to last.

There is, in conclusion, a word to say upon the literary merit of *Beowulf*, and on the Christian elements in the poem. The first of these Christian elements is the sense of a fairer, softer world than that in which the Northern warriors lived. I shall draw attention to this change hereafter, but here is an instance of it. After the description of Heorot among its desolate moors the Christian poet writes — "*He* said, who could tell the tale of the creation of men from old,[1] that the Almighty

[1] It seems to me (and perhaps others have without my knowledge thought the same) that this Christian piece may be from Caedmon. It reads like a quotation, "He who could the creation of men from old relate, said —" and the lines which I have translated above might be part of the three leaves miss-

had wrought the earth, the glorious-glancing plain that water girts around: and in victorious power set the gleam of sun and moon to give light to dwellers in the land, and adorned the fields of earth with branched and leafy trees." The lines seem to have a softer movement than the other *Beowulf* verses, and above all, that sought-out pleasure in natural beauty which does not belong to the pagan, but does eminently belong to the Christian poetry of the English before the Conquest.

Another Christian passage derives all the demons, eotens, elves, and dreadful sea-beasts from the race of Cain. The folly of sacrificing to the heathen gods is spoken of; but a kind of excuse is made for this, as if the writer were sorry for his forefathers. "They knew not the Lord God." In another passage, with curious forgetfulness of this previous statement, Hrothgar is made to give thanks to God for the death of Grendel, and Beowulf's work is done in the strength of God. "The King of Glory works wonder on wonder; let thanks to him be quickly given. Now hath a hero, through the might of God, done that which all our wisdom could not do. Lo, whatever woman brought forth this son may say that the eternal Creator was gracious to her child-bearing."

As to the Wyrd, God has either made it, or He can avert it, or He is identified with it; all these ideas are expressed. Then there is the sermon of Hrothgar to Beowulf after the victory over Grendel. It is couched in the manner of the gnomic verses. God is director of the fates of men, and they are many. A few are sketched, and the fate of the man of mighty race who comes to a prosperous kingdom is chosen. He is happy, till a portion of pride enters into his soul — pride which in all early English poetry is the chief overthrower of the life of man — and the passage where the slayer of the soul lodges the bitter arrow, the deadly sin of pride, in the heart of the man is a good example of homiletic English verse, and its metaphor constantly occurs in Anglo-Saxon poetry.

The only other point is the belief in immortality, of which the early Teutonic pagans had but a dim vision, for the Valhalla seems to have been a post-Christian conception. The poet uses of the death of Hrethel and others common phrases like those we find in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:* "He gave up human joy and chose the light of God" or "he chose the everlasting gain." Wherever these phrases occur, they spoil the

ing in the MS. of the *Genesis* after the 168th line. Those missing pages would contain the account of the creation of the sun and moon, and of the clothing of the earth with grass and trees. The *Beowulf* lines are 92–97.

natural impression of the poem, and we owe some thanks to the poet that he was merciful, and thought too well of his original story to do much of this kind of work.

When we think of the whole poem as it appeals to us in its unity, and ask ourselves what poetic standard it reaches, we must confess that it is not one of the great poems of the world. If we think of the date at which it was composed, the English have a right to be very proud of it, for it stands alone. There may have been others as good in the vernacular languages of Europe, but time has not chosen to preserve them, and this which it has preserved has a certain distinction in the fact that the story is unique, and the Grendel myth in it stands alone.

It has been called an epic, but it has no continuous self-evolution. It has, rather, two narratives concerning two remarkable events in a hero's life, each of which might be considered apart. It is narrative, then, rather than epic, but it has an epic quality in this — that the purification of the hero — the development of his character to perfection — is the main motive of the tale. When he appears again after fifty years of silence, he has the same moral dignity, the same equal and heroic heart in age that he had in youth. But we find him in a nobler position. He is not now the isolated hero; he has become the father of his people, the image of a great and worthy king. And at the last he dies for the sake of his folk, and leaves an immortal name. He knows, as he goes forth to the dragon, that Wyrd will now conquer his body, but she shall not conquer his soul. The moral triumph is attained, and fate, not Beowulf, is really conquered in the contest. This is the purification of the hero, and it is the ever-recurring theme of many a splendid poem. The subject, standing thus at the head of English literature, has silently handed down a great tradition of which our poets have not been unworthy. Nor have they been unworthy of the character-drawing which is so excellent in this poem. The unity of Beowulf's character gives to a broken-up poem some unity of design. There is also a force, a clear outline, a distinctiveness of portraiture in the other characters, which foretell that special excellence in English poetry — an excellence which has made its drama perhaps the most varied in the world.

It is another excellence of *Beowulf* that, when we leave out the repetitions which the oral condition of the poem created and excuses, it gets along. It is rapid, and it is direct. The dialogue is short, and says forcibly what it has to say; but it says it without much imagination, with scarcely one of those

touches which mingle earth and heaven, or which go home to the depths of the human heart. But in many places it is imaginative by its direct vision of the thing or the situation which is described, and by the short and clear presentation of it. A certain amount also of imagination collects round the monsters of the moor and sea, but that is rather in the myth itself and in our own imagination of these wastes of nature than in the poetry, though I do not deny it altogether to the verse. Then, again, the poem is lamentably destitute of form. Each of the lays used had no doubt its own natural form, which we should find good if we could isolate them one from another. But the poet did not understand how to shape them afresh or to interweave them well. The Grendel part is much better done than the Dragon part; indeed, there are portions of this last story in the poem which seem to have been broken on the wheel.

But when all is said, we feel that we have scarcely a right to estimate the poem in this critical fashion unless we could have heard it delivered. To judge it in our study is like judging an altar-piece far away from the town and the associations for which it was originally painted. If we want to feel whether *Beowulf* is good poetry or not, let us place ourselves in the hall as evening draws on, when the benches are filled with warriors and seamen, and the chief sits in the high seat, and the fires flame in the midst, and the cup goes round — and then hear the Shaper strike the harp. With gesture, with the beat of his voice and of the hand upon his instrument at each alliterative word of the saga, he sings of the great fight with Grendel or the dragon, of Hrothgar's giving, of the sea-voyage, to men who had themselves fought against desperate odds, to sailors who knew the storms, to the fierce rovers of the deep, to great ealdormen who ruled their freemen, to thegns who followed their kings to battle and would die rather than break the bond of comradeship. Then as we image this, and read the accented verse, sharply falling and rising with the excitement of the thing recorded, we understand how good the work is, how fitted for its time and place, how national, how full of noble pleasure.

CHAPTER V

THE MYTHICAL ELEMENTS IN "BEOWULF"

Now that we have gone through the *Beowulf* and its episodes, we are in a better position to consider certain elements in it which belong to literature, and to those myths which are the mothers of poetry. The historical and geographical questions are apart from my subject, nor do they belong to our England; but the question of the cycles of song which we trace in the poem, of the myths of Beowulf and Grendel, of Scyld and the Dragon, belongs to literature and to English literature.

As to the cycles of song, we have in the *Beowulf* evidence of heroic sagas which are contemporary with the supposed historical life of the hero, that is, with the sixth century; and evidence also in it of still earlier cycles. The first saga-cycle includes the songs sung concerning the earlier deeds of Beowulf before he became king. I do not mean the Grendel story, which was taken into the legend of Beowulf after the lay of his death, but the lays to which the hero himself alludes when he is dying. Then it is also plain that there was a lay which concerned the deeds of Hygelac, and especially his death in the sixth century. If Hrothgar too was an historical personage, and we may well believe it, his doings at Heorot, his feuds and battles were sung; and the mention of him and his quarrel with Ingeld in the poem of *Widsith* makes this very probable. We also understand from the accounts of the fates of Hrethel and his sons that there were a number of lays about treaties, feuds, and wars among the Swedes, Danes, Geats, Frisians, and others, which have no record except in the pages of *Beowulf*, but to which allusions are made in later sagas. Far-famed heroes like Ecgtheow, Ongentheow, Froda, pass us by, noble phantoms, the likeness of a kingly crown upon them, and are seen no more. The whole cycle of these lays is probably contemporary with those songs sung among the Goths of which Jordanes tells — the *barbara et antiquissima carmina* which

Eginhard in the ninth century says were collected by command of Charles the Great, but which have unfortunately been lost.

Beowulf suggests to us the existence of a still earlier cycle. The poets at the court of Hrothgar sing not only of heroes of their own time, but of men and women who have passed away, who have already become legendary. They chant the deeds of Finn and Hnaef and Hildeburh and Hengest, of Heremod and Healfdene, of Hoce ; and the mention of these names, outside of *Beowulf*, in the poems of *Widsith* and the *Fight of Finnsburg* confirms the conjecture that there was a whole cycle of lays which preceded *Beowulf* and dealt with these partly mythical, partly historical personages. Another legendary hero whom we touch in the later part of *Beowulf* is Offa, and the stories connected with him have already become lays. A yet older lay is that of Sigemund and Fitela, and we are told in *Beowulf* that the story was already ancient in the days of Hrothgar. If Sigemund be Siegfried, and Siegfried, as Vigfusson thinks, Arminius, we reach back, but only through the name, to the first century. But we seem to be able to go even farther back to a still earlier cycle, to personages who are not legendary, but mythic. We come on Ing, the first king of the East Danes, the divine root of the Ynglings as well as of the Scyldings, of the Angles as well as of the Danes, and Ing is, some say, the same as Sceaf. We hear of Weland, the semi-divine smith, whose name is mossed with gray antiquity. Most important of all, we have in the legend of Scyld with which the poem opens, and whose tale is the same as Sceaf's — the story of the divine founder of the Teutonic tribes north of the Elbe, the earliest ancestor-god our fathers worshipped. These tales, these allusions belong to a distant cycle of lays, and may have been sung in centuries long anterior to our poem. In this point of view then, that of age, and suggestions of a still greater age, the interest of *Beowulf* is extraordinarily great. Embedded in it we find lay after lay, like fossil after fossil — each of which testifies to a different stratum of song.

The next question has regard to myths and mythical elements. There are commentators who seem to make the whole poem and all the personages in it mythical. This is to go too far in an easy path, and to forget the slow upbuilding, I do not say of the poem as we have it, but of the subject. A common nature-myth no doubt runs through the whole of it. An historical myth of great antiquity, the myth of Scyld or Sceaf, appears in its introduction. Added to these mythical, there are legendary elements, which have had either a root in some

actual historical event, or have been connected with some hero who actually fought and ruled, and whose deeds, passing through legend, became part of the folklore of the nations; and the half-mythic, half-real animals of the sea in the story, belong, I think, to this folk-tale element. Added once more to this, there are historical elements like the battle of Hygelac with the Frisians.[1] Thus myth, legend, the folk-tale and a little history are conglomerated in the poem. These various elements do not exist separately, or at least it is very rarely that they do so. For the most part they interpenetrate one another. This is the case in the lay of the prince who sang his death-song and hid his treasure; who died after all his people had perished, and whose treasure the dragon found and guarded. A possible bit of history, a folk-tale, and a dragon myth mingle in that lay.

Again, to leave out many others, we come across elements which belong to commonly extended folk-tales in the story of Beowulf's youth. It is stated that he was not esteemed when he was young, and then appeared suddenly, to the surprise of all, as a great warrior. This is also told of the legendary Offa, son of Wermund, and stole afterwards into the tale of Offa of Mercia. Now it is one of the well-known characteristics of the heroes of the folk-tales — a characteristic handed down perhaps from some nature-myth — that their early years are obscure, and their person despised, that they are slothful or have some bodily defect, and that all in a moment, when their brothers have failed, they suddenly shoot into power and intelligence. The very nursery tales, the flotsam and jetsam of the folk-tales, are full of the dull boy who rises, like the sun freeing itself from clouds, into the sudden and bold adventurer.

We get nearer to myth in the nickers of the poem, but there is a mixture of natural fact in the description of them. These great sea-beasts who attend on Grendel's dam, and guard, like the herds of Proteus, her sea-cave, may be partly mythical — images of the monstrous fury of the waves, of the lower powers of the wintry sea. We are told that their name is afterwards mixed up with Hnikarr (who is Woden in his relation to the sea), and with the Nix, the water demon, in his various forms. But when we touch them in the poem, we are

[1] Hygelac became in after days a legendary person. He is identified with Hugleik of the Heimskringla, and with a certain Huglacus Magnus, of whom an account it given in a MS. of the tenth century, where he has become a mythic personage, and where the enormous strength of Beowulf seems to have been added to him.

with regard to them on the borderland between fact and myth, for at times they are scarcely to be distinguished from the tusked seals, and they are hunted by Hrothgar's men in much the same way as the Esquimaux to this day hunt the walrus. When they are also mentioned in the story of Beowulf's swimming match with Breca, they are half-mythical and half-actual sea-beasts, just like the story itself, which is myth, legend, and fact all rolled together.

These are not pure myths, but there are three things in the poem to which we may give that name — the story of Scyld, the contention of Beowulf with Grendel and the dragon, and the representation of Grendel and his dam.

The first of these is the story of Scyld. It is the introduction to the whole poem, and is followed by his burial, of which I have already written. Here is the passage —

> See now — of the Spear-Danes we have in stories heard,
> All the fame of our folk-kings in the far-off days;
> How the doughty nobles did mighty deeds of war.
> Oft has Scyld, the son of Scef, from the Scathers' host,
> From the multitude of tribes, taken their mead-benches!
> Awe-inspiring was that earl, since when erst he was
> Found in his forlornness. Comfort did he find for that!
>
> *Beowulf*, ll. 1–7.

How he was forlorn is explained later on in the account of his burial when his subjects recall how he came as a child to their shores. "They laid him," it is said, "in the ship's bosom, with no less of costly treasures on his breast than those had done, who at his beginning had sent him forth of old, alone, an infant, over the ocean waves." Who *those* were, none knew. He had come in a boat, drifting to the shores of Scania, and when he is launched by his people into the sea after his death, and the poem says "That none knew who took up that lading," it refers to the mysterious *Those* who had sent him forth.

The next lines mark what the God-given child did for Scedeland —

> He up-waxed beneath the welkin, in his worthy glories grew,
> Till that every one, of the folk abiding round
> O'er the pathway of the whale, had to pay him tribute,
> Had to give him service. That was a good king. ll. 8–11.

Of him was born Beowulf (that is the Beaw of the Anglo-Saxon genealogists, not our Beowulf, who was a Geat, not a Dane), "the son of Scyld in Scedeland." Then Scyld died at his appointed time, and was buried.

This is our ancestral myth, the story of the first culture-hero of the North, "the patriarch," as Rydberg calls him, "of the royal families of Sweden, Denmark, Angeln, Saxland, and England. We might say that Sceaf (the Scyld of the poem) belongs especially to England, for it is only in England that this myth has been preserved. It is told, not only in *Beowulf*, but by four English chroniclers, who add details not given in *Beowulf* — Æthelweard, William of Malmesbury, Simeon of of Durham, and Matthew of Westminster. The myth lasted then in the popular voice till the time of Henry II., and Rydberg says, with that certainty of a theorist which awakens doubt, that "a close examination shows that these chroniclers, with the *Beowulf* poem, have their information from three different sources, which again have a common origin in a heathen myth." They describe the boat drawing near the Scanian land, and a little boy asleep in it, with his head on a sheaf of corn, and around him treasures and tools, swords and coats of mail. The boat is richly adorned, and moves without sail or oar. The people draw it ashore, take up the boy with gladness, make him their king, and call him Scef or Sceaf, because he came to them with a sheaf of grain. This Sceaf is the same as the Scyld of *Beowulf*, or, as Scyld in the poem is the son of Sceaf (Earle translates *Scyld Scefing*, Scyld of the sheaf), the story of the father is there attributed to the son. Though the tale exists only in these English sources, yet the name Scef or Sceaf is elsewhere found in Northern Saga, and according to statements which may be traced to a Scef Saga, Denmark, Angeln, the north of Saxland, Götaland, and Svealand were ruled by him. "Legend derives from him," says Rydberg, "the dynasty of Upsala." *Beowulf*, as we have seen, brings all the royal family of Denmark from Scyld, the son of Sceaf, who in the Formanna sögur is called the god of the Scanians. Matthew of Westminster says that he ruled in Angeln, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in the complete genealogy of Wessex, traces back to Sceaf the origin of the West-Saxon kings. He is also, if we may believe Rydberg,[1] the same as Skelfir, in the Icelandic Sagas, who is the progenitor of the Skjoldings and the Ynglings, and is further identified with Heimdal, the Vana god, who, under the name of Rig, lived among men for a time, and

[1] Rydberg, *Teutonic Mythology*, pp. 87–95. When we have made every allowance for a certain fancifulness, and for the bias which a well-loved theory creates, this book is a real contribution to Northern mythology, and the myth of one original ancestor hero of the Danes, the English, the Saxons, and others, is rendered extremely probable.

did for them the same good deeds that Sceaf did for Scania. He is then, it seems, the mythical hero from whom the tribes round the mouth of Elbe, and north of it in Denmark, South Sweden and the islands derive their origin and their civilisation. His story is the myth of the man who first taught them agriculture, and this is signified by the sheaf which is his pillow in the boat, and by his very name. The lines in *Beowulf* continue the sketch of him as the "culture-hero." When he waxed to man's estate he became, we hear, the king, established law and government, and first welded together from one centre the scattered tribes into a people. "All the folk abiding round had to give him service."

The question as to the place where he set up his kingdom, and whence he spread his cultivating influence, also belongs to the myth, and may belong to the larger question — Whence, in distant prehistoric times, came the Teutonic Aryans? The old Teutonic myth declares that out of Ash and Embla, two trees, the gods made the first human pair. These trees were found upon the seashore, as if they had drifted thither out of the great Ocean. We may infer then that there was a tradition that on some place on the seacoast the Northern race stepped into history. The myth of Sceaf, in all its forms, tells the same tale; and the very region is named. The coast to which he comes from the sea is the coast of Southern Scandinavia. It is in Scedeland, we hear from *Beowulf*, that this dawn of Northern culture begins. "Scef," writes Æthelweard, "cum uno dromone advectus est in insula oceani quae dicitur Scani." William of Malmesbury and Matthew of Westminster bring him to the same place. When he grows up, he is, however, especially linked to Angeln. In the tale William of Malmesbury heard, Sceaf reigns, in a town which was then called Slaswich, but now Haithaby. Æthelweard tells the same tale — "Anglia Vetus sita est inter Saxones et Giotos, habens oppidum capitale quod sermone Saxonico Sleswic nuncupatur, secundum vero Danos, Haithaby." According then to the English tradition, Sceaf is our origin; the maker of the old England realm, the root of the English stem, and probably the divine race-hero and then the tribal deity whom the Angles worshipped when they came to Britain. It is in Sceaf then, as I dare to conjecture, and not in Woden, that we English find our earliest origin. He, veiled in the mists of ancient myth, may be our most ancient forefather, our ancestral god. The traditions of English chroniclers enshrine the story, and the ancient lay, of which we here speak, used as the introduction to *Beowulf*, tells of him — under the name of

his son Scyld — of his advent to the land whence our fathers came, of his glory, his death, and his romantic burial.

This ancestor-worship was part of the ancient religion of the Angles. The founders of their tribes, the heroes who taught them agriculture and organised war, who had wrought many peoples into one nation, were supposed to be still alive in the hills and barrows where they had been buried, and to have a continual interest in their folk. In process of time they became more and more divine, and the mysterious passage of Scyld after his death into the unknown seas, and his reception by unknown beings, may symbolise his gradual rise from the hero into the semi-divine personage.

Behind these ancestor-deities were greater Beings, objects of a more solemn worship; and I venture to think that in early times the English had very few of these gods, and that their conceptions of them were of great simplicity. They worshipped a personification of the Heaven, whom they may afterwards have called Woden, and who lived, not in the shielded hall of Valhalla, but in the watch-tower of a mountain fort in the sky. They worshipped Earth, the wife of Heaven, the great Mother of all. They worshipped their Son, whom after-ages called Thor or Thunder, "the farmer's friend," the god of the work done on the soil of the earth, the glorious summer who fights with the wintry giants and with the monsters who make the blight and the fog — a personification of the beneficent and renewing powers of nature. This is the Trinity which includes, as I permit myself to think, all the great gods reverenced by our English forefathers. The complicated mythology which in after times the Norsemen made, partly out of old heathen and partly out of Christian elements, and which we are accustomed to impute to our forefathers' religion, was, it seems to me, at first unknown to them. If we would realise what the English thought of religion when they came to our island, we must clear our minds of these late conceptions, and think only of the Heaven and the Earth, and the Summer; of the Father and Mother of all things and of their Son, who *may* have been called — for we do not know whether they were or not — by the English equivalents of Woden, and Frigg, and Thor.[1] As time went on, new forms of these old thoughts produced new deities. We have instances of these in the two goddesses

[1] I have placed a note at the end of this volume on the relation of Woden to Sceaf, and on the question as to whether the Angles gave the name of Woden to their highest God.

named by Baeda — Rheda (Hrede) and Eostra (Eastre), nature-deities, both of them probably personifications of the glory and brightness of the summer. Rheda, according to Grimm, is the shining and renownful goddess; Eostra the radiant being of the dawn, of the upspringing light. It was the worship of this latter goddess, and not of Balder, that the Christian priests found so deeply rooted among the English people that they adopted her name into Christianity, and transferred it, with all the thoughts that belonged to her myth, to the day of the resurrection of Jesus. They could not afford to lose all the emotions which belonged to the conquest of the Winter by the Summer.[1]

In opposition to, and beneath these beneficent powers, were the personifications of the destroying and harmful powers of nature, of the deep abyss of darkness, of the winter, the frost and storms, of the deadly vapours of the moorland and the fen, of the angry and overwhelming waves of the sea — the creatures of the dark, the giants, the ogresses, the fierce elves of the wood, the furious wives that rode the winds and the waves, who afterwards rose into goddesses or sank into witches — the demons of sea and land and sky. These could scarcely be called objects of worship, but objects of fear who were hated by the strong, and propitiated by the weak. Wells, stones, trees, hills, and a multitude of other things in nature received veneration, and finally behind them all rested, it seems, the Wyrd, the Fate-Goddess, who ruled the destinies of men, who tended to become in men's minds supreme even over the highest gods. This was the simple, rude, primeval religion of the early tribes who came over to England, and their sacrifices and feasts were probably imageless.

The early nature-worship contained in this religion is particularly enshrined in the second myth of which we have here to speak, — the myth of Beowulf; not of the quasi-historic hero of the poem, but of his name-sake the son of Scyld, whom the Anglo-Saxon genealogies call Beaw and who is usually styled Beowa. His mythical deeds, as I have previously explained, were transferred in process of time to the hero of the poem, and we may therefore consider them in that connection. Beowulf, in his youth, overcomes Grendel and

[1] Rhedmonath a dea illorum Rheda, cui in illo sacrificabant, nominatur . . . Antiqui Anglorum populi, gens mea . . . apud eos Aprilis Esturmonath, quondam a dea illorum, quae Eostra vocabatur . . . nomen habuit : a cujus nomine nunc paschale tempus cognominant, consueto antiquae observationis vocabulo gaudia novae solennitatis vocantes. Baeda, *De temporum ratione*, cap. 13.

his dam, and in his old age, the dragon. In the latter strife he dies himself.

Both contests are, at least partly, two different forms (modified by local elements) of the same original nature-myth of the Sun overcoming the Night, of the Night overcoming the Sun. Among the Northern tribes who had only two seasons, this daily contest was extended to the yearly recurring battle between Winter and Summer; between the frost and storm-giants who destroyed men and the labours of men, and the bright beings who, coming in the summer, brought life and fruitfulness and peace to men. Varied modifications of this, arising from peculiar features of the scenery and climate in which the inheritors of the general myth lived, were continuously made. Grendel and his mother, when we consider them as mythical, represent not so much the fierce winter powers, as the winter powers on the sea-coast, the demoniac welter and destroying strength of the stormy sea; and along with that, the horror and the pestilence of the moors beyond the fringe of inhabited land which extended between the sea and the moor; the malarious fogs which brought death and disease to men and vegetation, the blinding mist, the overwhelming and destroying rains and hail and snow to which the moorland seemed to give birth. Beowulf would then symbolise the Summer who puts an end to these terrors, the strong bringer of light and fruitfulness, the saviour of men. The dragon story is another form of the same root-thought, and we need not particularise it too much. Some have, with great nicety, made Grendel represent the wild sea of the spring equinox, and the dragon the storms of October and November, in fighting against which the summer dies. But when the myth first arose there was none of this complex thinking. It was a kind of childish story about summer and winter, about storms and calm, such as might arise to-day in Greenland.

The general statement is, then, that the whole tale of Beowulf and Grendel and the dragon had its far-off origin in the myth of the Summer conquering the Winter. But there are special elements in the myth of Grendel and Beowulf which make this general statement inadequate. The Grendel story seems to me the acorn of the whole poem, the aboriginal, primeval matter. The theory which some have started, that the dragon story was the earliest, and that Grendel was grafted upon it, appears to be wanting in the sensitive instinct for what is old. The dragon tale *is* the ancient myth of the serpent Darkness attacking the Light, but it is that myth in a some-

what modern shape, degraded into one of its thousandfold forms in the Folk-Tales, and centuries later than a grim, gray-haired creation like that of Grendel. It is, however, uplifted to a higher level in the poem, though still further modernised, by being moralised. The composer of *Beowulf* intended, I think, and this seems also Professor Earle's view, to represent under the destroying fires of the dragon, the evil forces which injure just government and noble kingship, and which are overthrown by the self-sacrifice of Beowulf for his people. The dragon myth in *Beowulf* seems to be a modern form of the ancient myth, and to have been made more modern by an ethical direction.

It is very different with Grendel. His story is the antique matter of the poem, and it is, as it stands, unique. It received no further circulation, and it awakens great curiosity. The name itself of the monster is a puzzle. Grimm connects it with the Anglo-Saxon *grindel* (a bolt or bar), a word found in various forms among the Teutonic languages. It carries with it the notion of the bolts and bars of hell, and hence of a fiend. He compares it to the German *höllriegel* (a hell-bar), hence the devil or the devil's own; and he compares Grendel, thus derived, with Loki, whose name he links to *lukan*, to shut up. This is somewhat far-fetched, and a much simpler etymology has been suggested. Ettmüller was the first, I think, to connect the name with *grindan*, to grind, to crush to pieces, to utterly destroy. Grendel is then the tearer, the destroyer, and if we bind him up as a water-spirit with the stormy sea, this derivation well expresses the crushing and battering force of the waves that grind the rocks, break up the ships, and rend the seamen. But I suspect that the name belongs to the most ancient forms of the Teutonic tongue — to a language as old as the hills — such as was spoken in the Stone Age to which I should like to refer the myth of Grendel. It may have come to the Teutons through the Celts; and indeed the only resemblances to it I have been able to find are Celtic.

With regard to the conception and story of Grendel and his mother, there are two questions to ask. First, Is there anything like it in the myths of other countries? and secondly, Is there anything that resembles it in after-story?

As to the first question, there are general resemblances in many demoniac and robber forms, in the Rakshasas of India, and other oriental persons who are cannibals, and in all the ogres of the Folk-Tales. Polyphemus, too, lives in a cave by the sea, and devours men. The story of Cacus may be compared. But these have no closeness to the subject-matter of

Grendel. We come nearer to it when we think of the giants of the Northern imagination, the eotens who dwell, like Grendel, in the wild wastes, who afterwards become the hill-folk; the trolls who live in the crags and caves, but who are also conceived, in the earlier and simpler way, as the huge indwellers of the dark caves under the overhanging cliffs which run back from the beach of the great ocean which clasps the Earth. Grendel may be a local personification of one of these giants, with traits added to him derived from the scenery of the place where the story first upgrew, and I daresay something of this conception entered into him. But there is more in him. He belongs not only to the sea, but to the moor and the marsh, and those who have made him the personification of the plague of the poisonous fen, and Beowulf the healthy storm wind that disperses the deadly vapour, have something to say for themselves. But to confine the conception of Grendel to this, and to leave out the sea, is to be too fond of a single idea. He is a mixture of many things, the last result of a number of rude folk-ideas. The nearest parallel to him which I have been able to find is a Celtic myth, and it seems to be of the same great age which I impute to Grendel. In it also the thoughts of the sea and the moor are combined, not of the moor itself, but of the mists and waters of the moor. For Grendel is essentially a water-demon.

In the mythic history of Ireland, the Fomori disturb Partholon and his people under the leadership of a *giant and his mother*. The Fomori are monsters, one-handed, one-footed. Their name is derived from *fomuirib* (under seas), and they are water-demons who are hostile to men, who pay unwelcome visits to the land, who, dwelling in the seas, have power over the ocean and lakes, who are also mythic representations of the mists and baleful fogs, the cold and stormy winds that injure the farmer's work. The Welsh have also a Mallt y Nos, the Night Mallt, a she-demon associated with the cold malarious fogs on marshy lands at night. Now these Fomori, demons like Grendel of the sea and mist, but also, like him, semi-human, are fought with by Nuada of the Silver Hand, and conquered, as Grendel is by Beowulf; and this battle is, of course, as that of Beowulf also, made by the mythologists into the dispersion of the mists by the sun, and the stilling of the winter storms and sea by the triumphant summer sun.[1] It is curious that in the Beowulf myth Grendel loses his arm,

[1] For all this I refer my readers to the *Hibbert Lectures* of 1886, by John Rhys, Professor of Celtic at Oxford, pp. 592, 603, 610.

but in the Irish myth that Nuada, the conqueror of the Fomori loses his hand; like Tyr, when in the Norse tale he binds the Fenri wolf. The hand business is thus reversed.

I have also found in Curtins's *Myths and Folk-Lore of Ireland* an independent parallel to the rending away of Grendel's arm. It is in the *Tale of the Seven Brothers and the King of France* (p. 270). The King of France loses his children, and asks Finn to help him. He sails over the sea, and one of the seven brethren with him is *Strong*. They hear that when a child is born to France, a hand comes down the chimney and takes the child away. On their arrival a child is born, and at the dead of night the hand descends and gropes for the child. "Strong caught the hand, and it drew him nearly to the top of the chimney. Then he pulled it down to the ashes, again it drew him up." All night this struggle continued, and every stone in the castle of the King of France was trembling in its place from the strife. But at break of day Strong tore from its shoulder the arm with the hand, and there was peace. Then they go to find the other three children, and find them drawing water to cool the shoulder of MacMulcan, from whom the arm has been torn. They deliver the children, and MacMulcan, who has a sister, pursues them. They saw the sea raging after them. "That is MacMulcan," says Wise, another of the seven brothers. This dæmonic sea-fiend drags the ship down, and they are only saved by Strong making a flail out of MacMulcan, and thrashing the head off his body on the ship; and the sea is filled with blood. This is a curious parallel. Strong is of course the same as Strongback in the common folk-tale; but nevertheless he suits with Beowulf's mighty strength. The sailing over the sea is like Beowulf's voyage. The trembling of the house in the strife is like the shaking of Heorot. The rent arm is, of course, a similar incident. By itself it might only be a coincidence, but what follows is remarkable. MacMulcan is, like Grendel, a creature of the sea, is identical in the tale with the raging sea. His head is struck off, and the sea, as in *Beowulf*, is filled with blood. He has a sister, like Grendel's dam, a female demon. I wonder if the Grendel tale may not be a Celtic story, which in very ancient times became Teutonic. These are the only similitudes to Grendel of sufficient importance I have been able to recover, and they point to the myth of Grendel being, as I maintain, of a primeval age, of the age of the giant rather than of the hero myths; that is, it existed before the myth of Beowa, which was afterwards bound up with it. The deadly

influences of nature were probably impersonated before the beneficent influences.

It was necessary, since so much has been made of it, to discuss this story from the point of view of the Nature-mythologists; but I think that we may wander far, and with great vagueness, in that direction. I am much more disposed to refer the whole story of Grendel to such a tale as may have arisen all over the North in the remoter days of history. In very early times a general tale might have grown up of the struggle of the first Teutonic settlers with the aboriginals who lived in caves in the unknown lands, and whose size would be magnified by superstitious dread. There are stories of this kind in Iceland, of wights who lived in deep and gloomy caverns. There is a cave-dweller's tale (edited by G. Vigfusson), and the cave-wight in it, whose burning eyes are like two full moons, chants monstrously and in a big voice a song which is supposed to be a death-song over the cave-kin of the country.[1] No doubt if such a story was used in a heroic tale like *Beowulf*, myths of nature would be mixed up in it, and it would be handled as poets handle folk-tales. It would lose the simple form, the naturalness of narrative, and take heroic proportions with a semi-divine element mingled up with it. Now if such a conjecture were hereafter to be rendered probable, we might find that the story as it stands in the Grettis Saga would be one of the representatives of this quasi-historical source of the Grendel story.

As to the after existence of the story, that fortunately lies plain before us. The first time that any one who knew the Beowulf poem read the Grettis Saga, he recognised his old acquaintance under another form, and said to himself that the story of Grendel had been brought over to Iceland from Scandinavia or England, or that the same thoughts out of which the Grendel story grew took a similar form in similar circumstances of climate, in a land incessantly covered with dark and dangerous mists. The point of difference is that Glam, who represents Grendel, has nothing to do with seas and waters, nor is he a primeval demon. He is only the embodied ghost of a thrall into whom the demon nature of the Haunter he has slain has entered. The semi-divine element is altogether gone out of him. But the fight of Grettir with him is very similar to the fight of Beowulf with Grendel. Farther on in the tale is another parallel. Grettir overcomes

[1] Grettis Saga, Magnusson and Morris, Notes, p. 277.

a giant who lives in a cave underneath the waterfalls. This second tale seems to have grown out of the fight of Beowulf with Grendel's dam, and is connected not with the sea, but with the turbulent waters of the earth. I content myself with quoting from Morris and Magnusson's translation the passages out of the saga which was probably written down in the thirteenth century.

It is told in the story that the valley where Thorhall fed his sheep was so haunted that his shepherds were evilly entreated, and none at last could be got to tend the outlying folds. But in the end he found a herd — Glam by name — "huge and uncouth, with gray and glaring eyes and hair that was wolf-gray, who was minded to do the work." This is a description which recalls Grendel, and the things afterwards told of his ways are also in tune with the monster. Folk cannot abide him; he is a loather of church song, and his whoop is as big as his body. Moreover, he is pagan at heart. "The ways of men," he says, "were better when they were heathen." He goes forth to the hills on Christmas Eve and, like Grendel, into the heavy weather — thick mirk, roaring wind, and driving snow. The haunter meets him, and next day he is found dead, blue as hell and as great as a neat — a thing of loathing. But he begins a new life and haunts in his turn instead of the haunter, slaying those who meet him, riding the house roofs at night, a dreadful scather of men, and worse in winter (here the old myth creeps in) than in summer.

Thorgaut, a tall strong man, says that he will serve Thorhall the farmer, and strive with Glam. But on Christmas Eve he is slain, and Glam waxes mightier now and slaughters the cattle and the neat-herds at the farm, till all men, save the farmer and his wife, flee from the place; and it was feared that the whole valley would be laid waste. News of this is brought to Grettir as news of Grendel is brought to Beowulf, and he has like Beowulf the strength of many men. So he comes to Thorhall-stead and says that he will have a sight of the thrall and lies down at night in the hall waiting for Glam, and the hall was all broken and wrecked, as Heorot was after the strife. Then there is a great battle which is like the battle between Beowulf and Grendel. "Light burned in the hall through the night, and when the third part of the night was passed, Grettir heard huge din without, and then one went up upon the houses and rode the hall and drave his heels against the thatch so that every rafter cracked again. That went on long, and then he came down from the house and went

to the door; and as the door opened, Grettir saw that the thrall stretched in his head which seemed to him monstrously big and wondrous thick cut.

"Glam fared slowly when he came into the door and stretched himself high up under the roof, and turned looking along the hall, and laid his arms on the tie-beam and glared inwards over the place. The farmer would not let himself be heard, for he deemed he had had enough in hearing himself what had gone on outside. Grettir lay quiet, and moved no whit; then Glam saw that some bundle lay on the seat, and therewith he stalked up the hall and gripped at the wrapper wondrous hard; but Grettir set his foot against the beam, and moved in no wise; Glam pulled again much harder, but still the wrapper moved not at all; the third time he pulled with both hands so hard that he drew Grettir upright from the seat; and now they tore the wrapper asunder between them.

"Glam gazed at the rag he held in his hand, and wondered much who might pull so hard against him; and therewithal Grettir ran under his hands and gripped him round the middle, and bent back his spine as hard as he might, and his mind it was that Glam should shrink thereat; but the thrall lay so hard on Grettir's arms that he shrank all aback because of Glam's strength.

"Then Grettir bore back before him into sundry seats; but the seat beams were driven out of place, and all was broken that was before them. Glam was fain to get out, but Grettir set his foot against all things that he might; nathless Glam got him dragged from out the hall; there had they a wondrous hard wrestling, because the thrall had a mind to bring him out of the house; but Grettir saw that ill as it was to deal with Glam within doors, yet worse would it be without, therefore he struggled with all his might and main against going out-a-doors.

"Now Glam gathered up his strength and knit Grettir towards him when they came to the outer door; but when Grettir saw that he might not set his feet against that, all of a sudden in one rush he drave his hardest against the thrall's breast, and spurned both feet against the half-sunken stone that stood in the threshold of the door; for this the thrall was not ready, for he had been tugging to draw Grettir to him, therefore he reeled aback and spun out against the door, so that his shoulders caught the upper door-case and the roof burst asunder, both rafters and frozen thatch, and therewith he fell open-armed aback out of the house, and Grettir over him.

"Bright moonlight was there without, and the drift was broken, now drawn over the moon, now driven from off her; and, even as Glam fell, a cloud was driven from the moon and Glam glared up against her. And Grettir himself says that by that sight only was he dismayed amidst all that he ever saw.

"Then his soul sank within him so, from all these things, both from weariness, and because he had seen Glam turn his eyes so horribly, that he might not draw the short-sword, and lay wellnigh 'twixt home and hell. But herein was there more fiendish craft in Glam than in most other ghosts, that he spake now in this wise —

"Exceeding eagerly hast thou wrought to meet me, Grettir, but no wonder will it be deemed, though thou gettest no good hap of me; and this must I tell thee, that thou hast got half the strength and manhood which was thy lot if thou hadst not met me: now I may not take from thee the strength which thou hast got before this; but that may I rule, that thou shalt never be mightier than now thou art; and nathless art thou mighty enow, and that shall many an one learn. Hitherto hast thou earned fame by thy deeds, but henceforth will wrongs and manslayings fall on thee, and the most part of thy doings will turn to thy woe and ill-hap; an outlaw shalt thou be made, and ever shall it be thy lot to dwell alone abroad; therefore this weird I lay on thee, ever in those days to see these eyes with thine eyes, and thou wilt find it hard to be alone — and that shall drag thee unto death."

"Now when the thrall had thus said, the astoniment fell from Grettir that had lain on him, and therewith he drew the short-sword and hewed the head from Glam, and laid it at his thigh."

The next parallel to *Beowulf* in the Grettis Saga is still more remarkable. The parts of Grendel and his dam are reversed. It is the Troll-wife who goes forth to a certain house to slay and cut men to pieces and to carry them off to her cave under the force. It is the man-giant who stays at home in the cave. The creatures are water dwellers and are mixed up with the powers of water like Grendel and his mother. The cave where they dwell and the firelight in it are like the cave and the fire in the ancient poem. The battle with the giant in it is as like the battle with Grendel's dam as the previous battle of Grettir with the Troll-wife is like that of Beowulf with Grendel. The Troll-wife dies of the loss of her

arm as Grendel dies of the same loss. The tearing, rending and battering down of the house belongs to the idea of Grendel. When Grettir comes to the edge of the waterfall and plunges into the boiling wave and dives under the waterfall to reach the cave while the priest sits waiting above, we recall Beowulf coming to the edge of the Ness and diving into the welter of water and up into the cave, while the thegns sit waiting on the rocks above. When Grettir slays the giant and the waves of the force are stained with blood and the priest, believing Grettir dead, goes home, we remember the blood-stained sea and that the thegns of Hrothgar returned, thinking that Beowulf was dead. There is even a parallel in one of the words used. The giant fights with a glaive which cuts and thrusts, and the saga says that men called that weapon "heft-sax." Hrunting, the sword Hunferth lends to Beowulf, is called *haeftmece*, and the term occurs only this once in the whole of Anglo-Saxon literature. The question then arises, Did it slip from *Beowulf* into the Grettis Saga?

Here are the parts of the story necessary to quote. They are, as before, taken from Morris and Magnusson's translation.

Steinvor, the good wife of Sandheaps, has lost her good man and her house carle by a haunting. Blood was left in the house, about the outer door. Grettir heard the tale and says that he will abide the night in the house, and he lay down but did not take off his clothes. "When it drew towards midnight he heard great din without, and thereafter came into the hall a huge Troll-wife, with a trough in one hand and a chopper wondrous great in the other; she peered about when she came in and saw where Guest (this was Grettir's assumed name) lay, and ran at him, but he sprang up to meet her, and they fell a-wrestling terribly and struggled together for long in the hall. She was the stronger, but he gave back with craft, and all that was before them was broken, yea, the cross-panelling withal of the chamber. She dragged him through the door, and so into the outer doorway, and then he betook himself to struggling hard against her. She was fain to drag him from the house, but might not till they had broken away all the fittings of the outer door, and borne them out on their shoulders: then she laboured away with him down to the river, right down to the deep gulf.

"By then was Guest exceeding weary, yet must he either gather his might together or be cast by her into the gulf. All night did they contend in such wise. . . . But now when they

came to the gulf of the river, he gives the hag a swing round and therewith got his right hand free, and swiftly seized the short-sword that he was girt withal, and smote the Troll therewith on the shoulder and struck off her arm, and therewithal was he free, but she fell into the gulf and was carried down the force."

So ends the first fight, but, as in *Beowulf*, there is another underneath the waterfall. Grettir is sure that there is more to be known of these monsters, and he passes to the cliff, fifty feet above the whirlpool, and girt with the short-sword leaped off the cliff into the force.

"And Grettir dived under the force, and hard work it was because the whirlpool was strong, and he had to dive down to the bottom before he might come up under the force. But thereby was a rock jutting out, and thereon he gat; a great cave was under the force, and the river fell over it from the sheer rocks. He went up into the cave, and there was a great fire flaming from amidst of brands; and there he saw a giant sitting withal, marvellously great and dreadful to look on. But when Grettir came anigh, the giant leapt up and caught up a glaive and smote at the newcomer, for with that glaive might a man both cut and thrust; a wooden shaft it had, and that fashion of weapon men called then, heft-sax.

"Grettir hewed back against him with the short-sword, and smote the shaft so that he struck it asunder; then was the giant fain to stretch aback for a sword that hung up there in the cave; but therewithal Grettir smote him afore into the breast, and smote off wellnigh all the breast-bone and the belly, so that the bowels tumbled out of him and fell into the river, and were driven down along the stream; and as the priest sat by the rope, he saw certain fibres all covered with blood swept down the swirls of the stream; then he grew unsteady in his place and thought for sure that Grettir was dead, so he ran from the holding of the rope and gat him home. Thither he came in the evening and said, as one who knew it well, that Grettir was dead, and that great scathe was it of such a man.

"Now, of Grettir must it be told that he let little space go betwixt his blows or ever the giant was dead. Then he went up the cave, and kindled a light and espied the cave. The story tells not how much he got therein, but men deem that it must have been something great. But there he abode on into the night; and he found there the bones of two men, and bore them together in a bag; then he made off from the cave and swam to the rope and shook it, and thought that the priest

would be there yet; but when he knew that the priest had gone home, then must he draw himself up by strength of hand, and thus he came up out on to the cliff."

The parallel is very close, and three suggestions may be made concerning it. Either the Beowulf Saga was known over Sweden and Norway, and its lays came from Norway or the Western Isles to Iceland with the first settlers; or some of the roving Icelanders had heard of the tale in England, and brought it back to Iceland in a broken fashion; or there was a tale older than *Beowulf* itself — a combination of a nature-myth and a folk-tale — which was common property of the Northmen, and out of which the Grendel story in *Beowulf*, and the Glam and Troll story both grew independently of each other.

One more parallel suggested in the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (vol. ii. p. 503) remains to be noticed. "In the English poem of Eger and Grime in the Percy MS., there is the echo of the Beowulf story in the hand of Grey Steele, the monster knight of the moor; and that noble brand Egeking mentioned there, which King Fundus got from 'full far beyond the Greekes sea,' may be the last traditional descendant of the hefti-sax," Beowulf's *haeft-mece*. I do not see much in the sword-part of this parallel. The *haeft-mece* in *Beowulf* is not Beowulf's sword but Hunferth's, and though it is famous, it would scarcely become traditional, as it fails in the encounter with Grendel. The only really mythic sword in *Beowulf* is the ancient sword of the cave itself, and of that nothing is really left but the hilt. There are swords enough to get Egeking from without tracing it to a failure.

CHAPTER VI

WALDHERE

It is a curious question how it came to pass that the story of Beowulf and Grendel did not, like the other sagas of the North, become a part of the Norse-German cycle of romance. The story stops dead; we hear no more of it. The Goths or Jutes who dwelt in the north of Denmark and Southern Sweden possessed it. The Danes of the islands possessed it. It passed downwards to dwell among the Angles, and the story may have reached the sea-board Saxons who came to England. But it gets no farther. Why did it not pass into the hands of the old Saxons? Why did it not become a part of Northern German legend? It does not do so; there is no trace of it. There is no evidence for the conjecture that it was one of the ancient songs to which the Franks listened.

I have sometimes thought that the Angles alone threw the myths and tales of it into lays, and that when the whole body of them emigrated to our island, they left the Continent naked of the tale. It would not have had time then to become a part of German saga. If the Danes had put it into verse, I do not understand why it was not carried into Northern Germany. I conjecture then that something broke the literary connection on the Continent, or that the story was developed only when the Angles got into Britain.

Again, if the Jutes or Saxons had it, why are there only vague traces of it in place names in our Southern England? I conjecture again that the stories were not shaped into verse by the Jutes.[1] Or it may be, since they were a small party of warriors and had so desperate a bit of fighting to do, that they would think, if they had the songs, more of slaughter and of

[1] Unless, as I have before suggested, there were Jutish or Frisian settlers on the sea-board, south of the Forth, among whom the Angles, on their arrival, found the lays of *Beowulf* existing. Such a discovery, if we may with any probability imagine it — would be likely to awaken in the Angles a fresh interest in their own form of the *Beowulf* lays, and to increase the vogue of the lays.

plunder than of preserving poetry. But the Angles went *en masse*, with all their women and all their bards, and they would take their literature with them. It was they, I hold, who in our England worked on the lays before the Christian poet wove them together.

Again, if the lays existed in Southern Sweden and in the north of Denmark, what became of them there? It seems as if there also they died out, or existed, not in verse, but only as a folk-tale. It was perhaps in that form that they got into Norway and thence to Iceland, if we may explain in this way the similarities between the Beowulf story and the tales of Glam and the Troll-wife in the legend of Grettir. But the more likely conjecture is that these similarities arose from Icelandic rovers bringing back the story from England or the Isles. Had the story really been established, even as a folk-tale, I think we should have had some further trace of it in the Norse tales.

I am inclined then to come to the conclusion that the Angles alone retained the Beowulf lays, or alone made them into a poem. If this have any truth in it, it isolates the poem with us. But if we may be proud of this, we may be humbled by another consideration. The Norse and Teutonic sagas were developed on the Continent and in Iceland into full romances, carefully worked and treated with art. There was enough of poetic power to do this work. But after the seventh or eighth century the story of Beowulf underwent no further development, and what we have of it is rudely wrought. Yet we must not blame the Northern Englishmen too much for this. There was not time to work further at the tale. The Danes destroyed the Northumbrian poetry, and when literature was revived in Wessex by Ælfred, southern Englishmen seem to have had little care for poetry of this kind, and little power of imaginative invention. *Beowulf* stands alone then, when it is looked at along with the carefully wrought tales of Sigurd or Theodric, like some crag of Plutonic rock, rugged and weather-worn, which rises among the later strata of a gentler age; the sole remnant of an ancient cycle of stories which have entirely perished.

When that ancient cycle was dying a new cycle had begun, and its tales grew by accretion for centuries in Germany and among the Norse folk, and have continued working in literature to the present day. It was not till quite lately that we had some proof that any of them had an influence on English literature or touched at all our country. Now, however, since

1860, we know that one at least of this new cycle of tales — one which belonged to the Theodric cycle and was embodied in the Vilkina saga — was domesticated in England; and if one of them, and one of the least important, is found in a Southern English dialect, it is of the highest probability that others were also written down from the songs of wandering bards. But, if they existed, they have all perished. No land was ever more ravaged by successive wars than the land of ancient English literature. Scarcely a shred of romantic manuscript survives; so thorough in destruction were pagan Dane and Christian monk, were the years of ignorance, of long neglect, of the tyranny of Latin, of the harrying of the monasteries by war and by reform, of modern fires and modern damps.

The discovery of almost every important extant Anglo-Saxon poem has been of special interest. And the discovery of the parchment leaves which tell us that the English had examples before them of the Norse-German cycle after the age of *Beowulf* does not want the element of sensation. Professor Werlauff, looking through a great mass of loose papers in the National Library at Copenhagen, turned up two vellum pages of a great age which had been used for the binding of a book, and saw that they were covered with Old English lines of verse, sixty-two lines in all. How they came to Denmark no one could tell, but it was conjectured that when Thorkelin searched England for Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and found *Beowulf*, he picked up also these two pieces of parchment and brought them with him to Copenhagen. Werlauff handed them on to Stephens to edit, and the literary exultation of this scholar at the discovery makes his little book upon them pleasant reading.

He found that the two sheets were not continuous but different portions of the poem, and conjectured that the whole of the story had been in manuscript. We had proof, he held, that a poem belonging to the Teutonic cycle and perhaps as long as *Beowulf*, existed in English, and Stephens thought that the handwriting was as old as the ninth century and the poem as old as the eighth. As the fragment refers to the Weland and the Theodric Sagas, it makes it probable that both these Sagas were known in England – a probability which is confirmed by the *Deor* poem. Those who have written on the fragment in Germany, and chiefly Müllenhof, agree on the whole with these dates. Each sheet contains thirty-one lines from the story of Waldhere. The first is Hildeguthe's speech to Waldhere, urging him to the fight with Guthhere. The

second is the interchange of words between Waldhere and Guthhere. There is not, therefore, a long interval between the two fragments we possess.

The personages mentioned in these two leaves are Ætla, Guthhere, Waldhere, Hildeguthe, and Hagena, and they told Stephens that he was in possession of an early version of the romance of Walther of Aquitaine. There are three forms, Müllenhof says, in which this saga of Walther has come down to us — a German form, a probably Frankish form, and a Polish form. The oldest of these is the German. The German form is not in existence, but we have a translation of it into Latin hexameters written in the tenth century by Ekkehard of St. Gall. Our fragments are probably an English translation from the original German version. The story, as Ekkehard tells it, is perhaps worth a sketch —

Attila[1] has invaded the Franks under Gibica's rule, and taken from them tribute, treasure, and a noble youth, Hagen, as a hostage. Marching on, he attacks the Burgundians and takes Hildegund, daughter of Hereric their king, as hostage. Lastly, he descends on the Aquitanians, and their king Ælfhere gives him his son Walther as hostage, and Walther is already affianced to Hildegund. These three then are brought up together and become personages in the court of Attila. Hildegund has the care of all the treasures, Walther is the leader of the Hunnish host, and Hagen, his nearest friend, is his war-comrade. At a certain time Hagen flees to the Franks to join his new liege, Gunther, and afterwards Walther and Hildegund also escape. They carry off treasure from the Huns whom Walther has made drunk; and both, mounted on Walther's war-horse, Lion, ride away till, on the fourteenth day, they reach the Rhine, not far from Worms. The ferryman tells the tale of the great horse, the warrior, the maiden, and the treasure chests, in the hall of Gunther, King of the Franks. Hagen breaks forth into joy: "This is my comrade Walther from the Huns." Gunther cries out also for joy: "This is the treasure of Gibica, I will have it"; and with Hagen and eleven warriors he pursues after Walther who has reached the forest of the Vosges. But Hagen is sorrowful, not wishing to fight with his friend, and he warns Gunther that if he had ever seen Walther in the wrath of battle, he would not think him so easy to despoil.

Now night has come, and in a pleasant cave, between two

[1] I use the better known form of the names in this account.

hills, and soft with green grass, Walther is slumbering, his head on his lady's lap, while she keeps watch; for Walther has known no sleep for fourteen days save when he leant upon his shield. In the dawn Hildegund sees a dust-cloud and wakens Walther. "Slay me," she cries, "lest I should belong to the Huns and not to thee!" But Walther knows the helm of Hagen, and laughing says: "These are not Huns, but Niblung Franks" (*Franci nebulones*); and vows that the Franks shall not have a grain of the treasure. They parley, but in vain, and Hagen withdraws from the battle and sits down to look on from a neighbouring hill. Then the fight begins, and Walther, swording in a narrow place where only one can meet him, slays the eleven warriors, so that Gunther is left alone. Walther, watching from his vantage ground, sees Gunther fly to Hagen, and, after talk, these two kiss one another, and Walther fears that the kiss bodes no good. Nor, indeed, does it, for they have agreed to draw Walther from his hold and ambush him upon the way.

It is now again night, and Walther, having wept and prayed over the warriors he has slain, sleeps in a cave, and in the morning, taking horses and treasure, goes on his way. But when a mile was now measured, they hear the beating of horse hoofs, and see Gunther and Hagen riding down upon them. "Flee, flee!" cries Hildegund. "No," he answers; "if honour fail, shame waits on my last hour." Then he appeals to Hagen, for old friendship and love, as Cuchulainn appealed to Ferdia, not to fight with him; but Hagen has lost his nephew — "my tender, soft, bright flower" — in the battle, and he will have requital for his blood. So two meet with one, and Walther smites off Gunther's leg, and Hagen Walther's right hand, for Walther's sword has flown to pieces, so dire was the blow he gave to Hagen's helm. But a right hand lost is nothing to the great warrior, and driving the stump of his arm into the shield, he fights on with his half-sword in his left hand. And now enraged he strikes Hagen so fierce a stroke that his right eye is forced out and all his face laid open to the jaw. This is enough, and they sit down in full friendship again, renewing their bond of blood; joke over their wounds, and part — Hagen with Gunther for Worms; Walther and Hildegund and all the treasure for Aquitaine, where, after a glorious marriage and his father's death, he reigns triumphantly for thirty years.

This is the outline of a story which is told with a great deal of vigour, and with some feeling for natural scenery, that kind of soft woodland in which the romance writers delighted. It

is greatly enlivened by dialogue, which rises sometimes into passion. There was evidently plenty of dialogue in the early saga, and all that we have in our English fragments is dialogue. The first of the two fragments, which I give here, is the speech by which Hildeguthe kindles Waldhere to the fight with Guthhere and the eleven warriors, and proves again, if we needed proof, with what eagerness the Teutonic women joined in the interests of war and felt for the honours of their lord. "Then did Hildeguthe courage him greatly —"

"Truly of Weland the work ne'er deceiveth
Any of men who Mimming[1] can wield,
Hoary of edges! Oft failed in the war
Man after man, blood-marbled, sword-wounded! —
Ætla's fore-fighter, let not thy force now
Drop to-day downward; let droop not thy lordship!
. . . . Now is the day
Thou shalt have one thing or else another —
Or lose thy life, or long-lived dominion
Make thine among men, Ælfhere's son!
At no time, my Chief, do I chide thee with words;
Since never I saw thee at the sword-playing —
Through wretched fear of whatever warrior —
Flee out of the fight, or in flight on the field,
Or care for thy corse, though a crowd of the foe
On thy breast-byrnie with bills were a-hewing;
But to fight forward was ever thy seeking!
O'er the mark was thy measure,[2] Meter of meeds!
So I feared thou would'st fight, too fiercely by far,
Around the camp-ramparts, in close set of war,
With some other of heroes! Then honour thyself
By thy great doings while good fortune rules!"

There are eight other lines, the allusions in which are obscure, but these are enough to show the writer's hand.

[1] Mimming (Mimungr) was the masterpiece of Weland, the most famous sword in the Northern world. It descended to Widia or Wudga, his son. This is the only mention of it in Old English, but we hear of it later on in the romance of *Horn Child*, a Middle English poem —

Than sche lete forth bring
A swerd hongand bi a ring;
To Horn sche it bitaught.
It is the make (mate) of Miming;
Of all swerdes it is king.
And Weland it wrought;
Bitterfer the swerd hight.

But Mimming is originally the work of Mimir, the great smith, who was the master of Weland, and who is the same as Regin in the Volsunga Saga. At least so Grimm declares.

[2] "Thy measure o'er the mark," that is, I conjecture, "Thy place was beyond the front-line of the battle."

The second fragment is not so vigorous or so human. It is a portion of the dialogue between Guthhere and Waldhere, and its main interest is in the mention of names which belong to the cycle of Romance that collected round Theodric. As Weland's sword is spoken of in the previous passage, so here Widia, Weland's son, "the kinsman of Nithad," is spoken of as having rescued Theodric from great straits. It is plain that the poem was written when the Theodric saga was well established.

As to its date, the poem seems to be so antique in form that it is put back to the eighth century, and its German original belongs probably to the middle of the seventh. That was a time of copious production of lays among the Lombards; Vigfusson and Powell have unearthed from the record of Paul the Deacon, who died in 790, two close paraphrases of old Ælfwine lays which are contemporary with the poems of Caedmon, if we take the probable date of them as between Paul and Ælfwine. Ælfwine Æadwineson is Alboin, King of the Lombards, who died in 572. They go on to say that "these songs" (assuming that Paul's prose was derived from songs, and assuming also their own date) "are the earliest remains of Teutonic epic poetry which we have any exact knowledge of." The first of these is certainly a brilliant example of the heroic lay; the second seems to me much more like a piece of monkish history. They will both be found at p. lii., etc., of the Introduction to the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*. There are, perhaps, several other passages in Paul from poems of this early period.

One other vernacular fragment of song of an early time — belonging to the heroic cycle — is not English but German, yet is connected in manner and style with *Waldhere*. It is the ancient lay of Hadubrand and Hildebrand, and was found, as *Waldhere* was found, on a piece of parchment used in binding a book, in the monastery of Fulda. It is a MS., we are told, of the eighth century, and was probably sung as a lay in the seventh. The story is curiously like the story of Sohrab and Rustum, though we do not know the issue of the fight. Hildebrand challenges his son Hadubrand, to single combat. Hildebrand asks of what parentage he is, and hears from Hadubrand enough to prove that he is his son whom he had left behind in Italy as a child of three years old when he fled years ago to the east from Odoacer. He declares his fatherhood, his son does not believe him — Hildebrand, he says, is long since dead. At this the father mourns the fate which is near him of falling by his son's hand; but, as he speaks, the war-fever seizes on

him and the men fall to with spear and axe. We hear no more, but can well imagine that the story ends as Sohrab and Rustum ends. This is the only piece of German heroic verse[1] which can compete in age with those that we possess, and it is later, I believe, than the *Lament of Deor*, later certainly than the *Fight at Finnsburg* and the lays contained in *Beowulf*.

[1] The Weissenbrunner Prayer in alliterative High German verse belongs probably to the eighth century, but its only value is its age. In the ninth century we find a Low German poem, the *Heliand*, of which we shall have something to say in connection with the poems attributed to Caedmon. But these are plainly Christian; they do not intrude among the remnants which coming down originally out of heathen times are romantic, not religious.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONQUEST AND LITERATURE

The *Fight at Finnsburg* and the lays from which our *Beowulf* was composed were, as it seems to me, sung among the English who dwelt in the north of Denmark and the south of Sweden, and whose tribal name was the Jutes or Goths. They were also sung among the other English who dwelt in the south of Denmark and who called themselves Angles. And I have conjectured that it was in this part of the English territory that they and *Widsith* were best preserved. The Angles, even in their seats on the Continent, seem to have shown the same desire to take care of literature which they afterwards had in Northumbria. I do not think, for reasons to which I have alluded, that the songs of *Beowulf* were much cared for, among the other English whom we know as Saxons, who dwelt in Hanover and Friesland, and who were the most southern of these three tribes whose common name was English, whose language was called English, but all of whom the Welsh and Irish called Saxons.[1] The Saxons also had, we may be sure, their own lays, and if we could but discover Ælfred's Handbook, we should no doubt find some of them in it.

When the English came over they continued to make songs, to chant the daily chronicle of the conquest. This was their only literature, their only history; and though there is not much to tell of it, yet the imagination loves to dwell upon its fragments. In these rude chants begins the poetry of our island-England. The glory of a thousand years of song shines backward on its sources. During 147 years the poetry of England was altogether heathen. It was unbroken by a single Christian voice, save perhaps, as the battle joined, by the chanting in

[1] It is well, even at the risk of repetition, to mark out — and I refer my readers to York Powell's Primer of *Early England* — the unity of the English tribes in the continental England. It has more bearing on literary questions than at first sight appears.

the distance of the British monks, which, when the English heard, they declared to be the singing of spells and the singers wizards. On this account Æthelfrith, at the battle of Chester, slew the dark-robed creatures, one and all. "If they cry to their God against us," he said, "they fight against us, though they do not carry arms."

In the year 597 Augustine brought Christianity to England, and the warriors of Æthelberht listened to the praise of Christ instead of the praise of their war-god. But for many years after, the war-songs, the rude verses sung by the freemen in the village as they ploughed, the charms for fruitful earth, against wounds, against the elves, the chants of the gleemen round the moot-tree or in the ealdorman's hall continued to be heathen. When Cædmon produced the first Christian poems the people in Sussex were still heathen, and in many parts of Christian England heathendom retained a considerable power. No doubt, poems which we might call heathen, such for instance as the *Wanderer*, were composed after Cædmon, as Christian poems were composed before him; but nevertheless the date of his death, 680 A.D., may be taken to mark most conveniently the final conquest of heathen by Christian poetry. It ends a period of 230 years, from 450 to 680. It is this period which we shall consider in this chapter, collecting together the Old English verse which belongs to the events of the invasion and the settlement; and touching on other matters which are likely to throw light on the growth of English literature.

The English tribes had, from the beginning of the fifth century, made some small and scattered settlements on the coasts of Roman Britain, but it was not till the year 449–450 that they came to stay. In that year, the story goes, a band of Jutes, under two war leaders, Hengest and Horsa, landed at Ebbsfleet, and landed to remain. No doubt, as they pushed the bows of their three long keels on to the shore of the Isle of Thanet, they shouted short staves of verse with so great a roaring that Gildas might well call them "whelps from the lair of the barbarian lioness." But we may be sure that the songs were louder when, in 455, their numbers swelled by new arrivals, the whole host, clashing their spears on their shields and singing hymns to their ancestral gods, crossed the inlet that divided Thanet from the mainland and set forth to ravage the country. Of a different character, and done by the Scôp of Hengest, would be the song that followed the fight at Aylesford; but it would be mixed with sorrow, for Horsa was slain in that battle, and some days after they piled up his

barrow, facing it with flint stones, on the neighbouring hill. There also they chanted, as his thegns did around the grave of Beowulf, the great deeds and character of their fallen leader.

Three entries in the *Chronicle* then record the various stages of the conquest of Kent; and the eighteen years which it took to accomplish, show how stout was the resistance of the Welsh, as the English called the Britons. The last is as follows 473 A.D.: "Now Hengest and Æsc his son fought with the Welsh and took countless booty, and the Welsh fled the English as it were fire." This reads as if part of it were taken from a battle-song. The exultation in the countless booty that the English found in the fat meadows of the Romney marshes, the metaphor of the flight, as from fire driven by the wind, bear with them the savour of the war-song. Some years afterwards, 477, a band of Saxons landed in the south near Chichester, and when fourteen years of warring had gone by, took Anderida, 491, the Roman fortress where Pevensey afterwards stood. This soon made complete the little kingdom, as it was afterwards called, of the South Saxons or Sussex; and the record in the *Chronicle* which celebrates the slaughter of all within Anderida may be derived from the song of victory. Henry of Huntingdon's account of the siege is full of details which have on the whole been accepted as historical, and it is conjectured that he had before him some ancient versings of the fight.

I have connected these first battles with verse and song that it may be clearly understood how large a part poetry played in the life of the English. To dwell further in this fashion upon the connection of battles with verse would be mere book-making. I am content if my readers will realise that not a single battle, or feast in the evening, or great ceremony, or vow over the cup to carry the conquest further, or entrance of a fleet into the Humber or the Forth, or burial of a leader, or settlement by the river-side, but was accompanied with poetry. Hengest and Æsc, Cerdic and Ida and Æthelfrith sang as they fought. England was conquered to the music of verse, and settled to the sound of the harp. She was not alone in that, but it is as well to record it in this connection.

In 514, to follow Mr. Green's account, another band of Saxons, under Cerdic and Cynric landed "for definite conquest" near the Itchen river and fought their way up to Winchester, and the fight there, and that which ensued at Charford in 519 were followed a year after by a victory of the Welsh at Mount Badon which kept quiet for a time the English advance and saved Amesbury from destruction: "Amesbury, choir of Am-

brosius, probably *the* monastery of Britain — the centre from which flowed the blessings of civilisation and Christianity."[1] Thus, Cerdic having been in 519 created king — a new title among the English, — the first kingdom of Wessex, that is the land now called Hampshire, was established. So then, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire — the south-east of Britain, were now conquered and settled by the English.

There are two things bound up with literature, to say about this last conquest in Wessex. The first is that at the battle of Mount Badon we meet for the first time, if Dr. Guest and others be right, with the historical Arthur whose myth has so profoundly influenced the literature of Europe. If it was he who conquered the English at Mount Badon and gave the land peace for nearly thirty years from the invaders, and who preserved the monastery and learning of Amesbury, we have an additional pleasure in thinking of the conquest his story made in after years of the imagination of the English people. If he actually brought a comfortable calm after the "tempest of ruin" which fell upon the Britons, we feel as if the legend that he is to come again and restore a golden peace received a new touch of charm.[2]

[1] This is Dr. Guest's phrase. He identifies Mount Badon with Badbury in Dorsetshire, and Amesbury with the Caer-Caradoc of the Triads. But it must be remembered that Mr. Skene places his historical Arthur in the north, and identifies his twelve battles with sites in the country between and below the Forth and the Clyde; and, as far as I am fit to judge, he appears to have proved his theory. — *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, vol. i. pp. 51-58. When two authorities, however, each so wise in his work, disagree in their conjectures, some may perhaps wish to choose that conjecture which pleases them best; and whether Arthur fought in the north or the south, he fought with so great a fervour that we can bind up, without loss of sentiment, the historical with the mythical hero. But, after all, I fancy that Arthur was originally a mythic name, and was given by the Celts in southern and northern Britain and elsewhere, to any great chieftain who, among them, fought and conquered their foes.

[2] It is not unfitting, even at this early period of a history of English poetry, to pause at the name of Arthur. Who he was, whether he really existed otherwise than as a mythical personage, whether northern or southern Welsh obeyed his call in war, are questions with which literature has but little to do, and which history may not solve with certainty. What is certain is this, that no name (and I speak only of our own land) has had more power over English poetry than the name of Arthur, and no story has had more influence over the imagination of English poets. Like most of the great tales, his tale has a divine vitality of its own, growing like a tree, continually reclothing itself in new foliage and sending forth, from age to age, new branches, so sturdy, so prolific, that they seem like distinct trees. Yet Arthur is always the root-stock of them, and the life of the root seems inexhaustible. Again and again new poetic periods, new forms of song, have started from Arthur. It was his story that kindled Layamon who began, after the Conquest, imaginative English poetry; which also stirred in that original English poet, the author of the "Grene Knight," and of the "Pearl." Chaucer, when he got home to his own English work, could not refrain from Arthur. Spenser, desirous to couch the

The second thing is in relation to the view that Gildas, whose History and Epistle were written about 545–560, took of the invasion and the invaders. When he was writing, the greater part of the land, north and west of this conquered corner in the south-east, was Roman Britain. Its fertile valleys and river plains were covered with villas where the provincial had lived with his serfs; the land was richly tilled and fed great herds of cattle; but the hamlets were scarcely touched with Roman civilisation. The towns were filled with a mixed population of pure Welsh and Romanised Welsh, and were often two towns in one, the Roman town upon the river, the ancient British town under the mounded fortress on the hill, as, for example, was the case at Uriconium.[1] The arts, the literature, the laws of Rome prevailed in the towns side by side with the vernacular poetry of the Welsh, but this Roman element seems to have been almost dead at the time of the Conquest, at least in some of the towns. Bath, Gloucester, and Cirencester appear from the *Chronicle* to have been under the rule of Welsh kings. Christianity was established amongst them, but we see from Gildas how little influence it had over the lives of the priests and the Welsh princes of his time. His epistle is a protracted denunciation of a condition of society in which vice and crime ran riot. A few, however, remained who were worthy of the better past, "by whose worthy lives, a pattern to all men, our weakness is sustained." His one hope for the country was in the restoration of the purer life that had been, and he calls on all men to repair the Church of God, to bring back learning to the monasteries and good manners to the land. The hope was not fulfilled. The

new-born Muse in the loveliest of cradles, found it in the tale of Arthur. "Girt with British and Armorick Knights," Arthur kindled the first epic fire in Milton. Wordsworth, when Man and Nature, hand in hand, passed for moments from his view, felt, along with Scott, the alluring charm of Arthur. Tennyson, beginning a new world of song, saw the hero and his knights and ladies when first he wrote, and in after years wrought the scattered Idylls of the King into our latest epic.

These are a few names out of many, but to what a vitality, to what a power do they not bear witness? I have said nothing of the influence the Welsh story has had on literature at large, nothing of its invasion of our land along with the Normans, of the Anglo-Norman poems, nothing of its fresh invasion of Wales from Armorica, nothing of the story of Geoffrey of Monmouth with which the historians were so indignant, of the work on it done by Walter Mapes, and the further work done on it by Malory, nor of the extraordinary impulse these three versions or enlargements of the tale had on literature. Let them be only mentioned here. Enough has been said to more than excuse a pause at Arthur's name. We meet it now in the sixth century. We have him with us in the nineteenth, and he has played the part of a living man right through the literature of thirteen hundred years in Wales and England.

[1] Guest, *Origines Celticae*, vol. ii. pp. 305, 306.

whole of the old culture was annihilated by the English. Gildas saw a part of this hurricane of ruin with his own eyes, and as we look back to his days from ours, in which English literature is one of the great powers, it is strange to listen to his horror of the fierce and impious Saxons, wolves, dogs, whelps of the lioness, barbarians, bastards, robbers, and yet to think that in the loins of these ravaging English warriors were Caedmon and Ælfred, Baeda, and Dunstan. Nor is it less strange to read of his misery for the trampling out of Christianity by the hoofs of pagans who not so very long after produced the first extant Christian poem in any modern tongue, whose schools of learning under Christian bishops sent forth missionaries to the heathen, instructed Europe in learning by the voice of Baeda, and advised the great Charles on all points of education and religious practice by the mild wisdom of Alcuin. So strangely do the eyes of decaying culture mistake the days in which it lives; so important it was for the sake of the literature of the world that in one country at least the Roman literature should be expunged for a time in order that the fresh originality of the Teutonic mind should have the ground clear for its growth. When, having rooted itself, it came again, through Roman Christianity, into contact with Roman literature, it did not lose the freshness of its own stock. It assimilated, at least in the North, Latin thought into a living body of English poetry.

With the end of the time of quiet after 520 — a time which seems to have lasted about thirty years — the West Saxons under Cynric (552) opened from Winchester an attack on Old Sarum, and soon won our Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, and Berkshire. From Berkshire they went eastward and having made Surrey and the Four Towns their own, returned to Wiltshire, and thence, but now under Ceawlin as leader, drove their war-plough to Cirencester (Corinium), and thence through a country crowded with the villas and estates of the provincials till they met the three Welsh chieftains of Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath, at Deorham, a village northward of Bath. There the West Saxons (577) "fought with the Brits and slew three kings, Commagil and Condidan and Farinmagil in the place which is called Deorham, and took from them three cities Gleawanceaster and Cyrenceaster and Bathanceaster." This battle gave them the whole valley of the Severn south of Arden and east of the river. Seven years after they made another inroad up the Severn valley, entered Shropshire and went up the river till they reached Uriconium (Wroxeter), and having

destroyed that town pushed northward still towards Chester. They were met on the borders of our Cheshire by the Welsh at Fethanleag (Faddilay), three miles west of Nantwich, and Ceawlin, defeated there, "returned thence in wrath to his own country."

I have introduced this bit of history because the destructions of Bath and of Wroxeter are connected with our literature. The first is bound up with the poem of the *Ruined Burg*, and the second with a Welsh elegy which, independent of its enabling me to draw attention to the influence of Welsh on English verse, is almost a parallel to the *Ruined Burg*.

Bath, during the Roman period, ranked in importance with Gloucester. They were both excelled by Cirencester, and Cirencester was inferior only to York, London, and Colchester. The Roman remains, even now found in Bath, prove its wealth; and the public buildings of well-wrought stone, the temple to its local deity, the colonnade and porches over its hot springs, its wide forum and splendid baths, were still in existence when the city was sacked and burned by Ceawlin. There is no actual statement in the *Chronicle* that Bath was destroyed by Ceawlin, but it was not the habit of the English at this time to dwell in towns, and Bath remained for fully a century in a state of ruin. These are the ruins that the poem called the *Ruined Burg* describes, at least that was Leo's view, and is Professor Earle's. Whether the lines are written about a *city* or a *castle* has been questioned, but the phrases, "many meadhalls," "high the crowd of pinnacles," — point to an extensive town.

The date of the poem is of course much later than the overthrow of Bath by Ceawlin, but it is bound up by imagination with that terrible day. The poet who wrote the lay placed his thought in the midst of the destruction of the town by the West Saxons, and pitied those who suffered it. "In the wide slaughter," he says, "they perished when came the days of bale." We see that many years of decay and the wasting of Nature had passed over the ruins, when the singer stood first amongst them and was moved by their desolation. They are "undereaten by old age." And we may guess the very time. It was in 676 that Osric, an under-king of the Hwiccas, founded a monastery among the ruins of Bath; and around it in later years grew up a new town which was raised into importance by Offa in 781. Some Scôp, during these years between 676 and 781, coming in a chieftain's train to visit the place, or some monk of the monastery, wandering among the ruins in a winter

evening ("hoar-frost is on the mortar" he says) made these verses, verses which have been rashly extolled as the best which the Early English Muse has left us, but which, amid their conventional expressions, have still a fine quality.

Wondrous is its wall of stone. Weirds have shattered it!
Broken are the burg-steads! Crumbled is the giants' work.
Fallen are the roof beams; ruined are the towers;
All undone the door-pierced towers; frozen dew is on their plaster!
Shorn away and sunken down are the sheltering battlements,
Undereaten of Old Age! Earth is holding in its clutch
These, the power-wielding workers; all forworn are they, forlorn in death are they![1]
Hard the grip was of the ground, while a hundred generations
Move away of men. Long its wall abode
Through the rule that followed rule, ruddy stained, and gray as goat,
Under storm-skies steady! Steep the court that fell,
Still it falleth . . . (skilful ancient work it was)!
Strong in rede, (the builder strengthened), strong of heart, in chains he bound
All the wall-uprights with wires, wondrous-wrought together!
Brilliant were the burg-steads, burn-fed houses many;
High the heap of hornèd gables, of the host a mickle sound,
Many were the mead-halls, full of mirth of men,
Till the strong-willed Wyrd whirled that all to change!
In a slaughter wide they fell, woeful days of bale came on;
Famine-death fortook fortitude from men;
All their battle bulwarks bare foundations were!
Crumbled is the castle-keep; those have cringed to earth
Who set up again the shrines![2] So the halls are dreary,
And this courtyard's wide expanse![3] From the raftered woodwork
(See) the roof has shed its tiles! To ruin sank the market-place,[4]

[1] *Forworn* is put in for the sake of the assonance with *geleorene*, but of course I do not mean that *forweorone* has anything to do with *werian*. It means (from *weosan*) decayed, tottering, *decrepitus*. I have put a full stop at *geleorene*, which is not the ordinary reading.

[2] *Betend crungon — hergas to hrusan.* Many translations have been made of this obscure passage. B. and T. translate "The atoning bands sank to earth." I do not understand what they mean. Earle translates "Pitifully fell the armies to the earth." I take *betend(e)* to mean those who restored or kept up the shrines, and this, if it be a possible translation, has a clear meaning.

[3] *Teafor geapu.— Teafor* is often translated as an adjective, signifying *red*. Leo, for example, takes the two words together and translates them *rote Lücken*. I have chosen to render *geapu* (the wide opening) as the wide expanse; and *teafor* (which means "foundation place") the courtyard of, or the open space surrounding, the fortress, a place where the foundations for new buildings might be made. *Teafor* is then taken to be a repetition of *geapu*. "The wide expanse, the foundation place is also dreary." After this I place a full stop, and the words that follow begin a separate piece of the description. But this may be too audacious, and would certainly be so, were not the whole passage so obscure.

[4] *Wong*, which means a plain or a flat meadow, may here, I conjecture, mean the forum, the open space in the midst of the town, with all its shops in ruin, and this meaning agrees with the lines that follow.

Broken up to barrows; many a brave man there,
Glad of yore, and gold-bright, gloriously adorned,
Hot with wine and haughty, in war-harness shone;—
Saw upon his silver, on set gems and treasure,
On his welfare and his wealth, on his winsome jewels,
On this brightsome burg of a broad dominion!—
There the stone-courts stood; hotly surged the stream,
With a widening whirling; and a wall enclosed it all,
With its bosom bright. There the baths were set
Hot within their heart; fit [for health] it was!

"Then they let flow in over the hoary stone the streams of heated water. The waves filled the round and boiling mere.[1] That was a kingly thing."[2]

The second literary interest connected with the West Saxon advance is the Welsh song on the destruction of Uriconium. That poem is an old *marwnad* or elegy, and was composed, it is generally thought, by Llywarch Hen, who lived, men say, in the sixth century.[3] It is "in the soldier's triplet, the oldest known form of Welsh versification, and its style is lyrical." It has, no doubt, suffered changes in the progress of time, but,

[1] It might well be called a mere; when the central bath was found in 1755, sixteen feet below the surface, it was ninety feet long by sixty broad. "There is a city six (12) miles from Bristol, where the hot springs, circulating in channels artificially constructed are collected into an arched reservoir to supply the warm baths which stand in the middle of the place, most delightful to see and beneficial to health. This city is called Bath from a word in the English tongue which signifies *bath*, because infirm people resort to it from all parts of England for the purpose of washing themselves in these health-bringing waters — and persons in health also assemble there to see the curious bubbling up of the warm springs." This is the account of Bath given in the *Acta Stephani*. It reads as if the writer had seen our poem, and is certainly — since the Roman arrangement was probably rebuilt or repaired — a confirmation of Earle's belief that the ruined burg was Bath.

[2] Wülker reads *þing huse*, which may mean, "That was a place where a king's Thing might assemble." I may as well, in passing from this poem, quote, as an illustration of it, Gildas' description of the attack of the English on a town. "All the columns" (he speaks of the assaults as if they were made on the temple of God) "were levelled with the ground by the frequent strokes of the battering ram, all the husbandmen routed, together with their bishops, priests, and people, whilst the sword gleamed, and the flames crackled around them on every side. Lamentable to behold, in the midst of the streets lay the tops of lofty towers, tumbled to the ground, stones of high walls, holy altars, fragments of human bodies, covered with livid clots of coagulated blood, looking as if they had been squeezed together in a press, and with no chance of being buried save in the ruins of the houses, or in the ravening bellies of wild beasts and birds."—This is Dr. Giles' translation, and he borrows in places from the old translation. The whole passage is obscure.

[3] Guest's text of the poem is from the Red Book of Herghest, a MS. of the fourteenth century; and his translation is "intended to be *literal*." He thinks that this soldier's triplet (*triban milwr*) "suggested the use of final rhyme to the Latinists of the third and fourth centuries who first introduced it, and most of whom were Celts by birth." Is it not possible, then, that the rhymes we find in Anglo-Saxon poetry may be derived from Celtic poetry?

if here we may follow Dr. Guest, it represents a poem contemporary with the fall of Uriconium, and written by one who knew the details of the fight and had seen the place. The poet paints himself as an eye-witness, as escaping with his family from the slaughter, and looking down from a hill upon the town in flames. We find ourselves, in its verse, listening to another type of poetry than the English, to a much more imaginative, to a much better shaped poetry — poetry which, entirely Celtic in tone, had perhaps been influenced by the Roman culture. If it was really contemporary with the destruction of Uriconium in 584, we may say that this Welsh piece, with others even earlier, is, with some lays in *Beowulf* and the fragment of Finnsburg, and, it may be, a few Irish fragments, the oldest extant modern poetry.

Kyndylan of Pengwern (Shrewsbury) is the hero whose death is lamented. He is slain defending Tren, the White Town, the capital of the district. Tren is identified by Dr. Guest as Uriconium, the town built, not of timber, but of hewn stone, after the Roman fashion. Five miles from it was the British stronghold in the woods along the Severn bank, near Pengwern. Twelve miles up the valley of the Tern there is a high and remarkable ridge of rocks called Hawkstone, in front of which there was a strong British fortress, which, if the ridge were then called the Hel or El, might take the name of *Eli*. From these two the poet describes the eagles of the foe [1] descending eager for the flesh of Kyndylan. "Pengwern's eagle with the gray-horn beak, Eli's eagle, screaming aloud," both sail down their several valleys eager for the blood of men. There is no finer image in early poetry, and it brings the fierceness of the contest before us with extraordinary vividness. Not far off from these two fortresses stood a little group of Celtic churches, which Guest identifies with Baschurch, a small town or village about seven miles north of Shrewsbury.

[1] As both Pengwern and Eli, according to Guest's conjecture, were British fortresses, the eagles coming from them and eager for the flesh of Kyndylan, show us that these fortresses had been seized by the English. But it is, perhaps, fanciful to make the eagles into the foe, and more simple to think that they only mean the birds of prey. It may be also fanciful of me to say that the allusions to the wild boar are allusions to the English. But I let it stand. Kyndylan, "whose heart is now cold as winter's ice," has died by the "thrust of a wild boar through his head." The English called their chiefs the wild boars and in the tenth stanza the term is used of the whole of the English host: "The wild boar will not give back to Kyndylan his father's town." If the original poem then be contemporary, the English in 584 were helmeted with the boar, or crested with the boar, as we find them in *Beowulf*.

There lay Kyndylan, carried thither when the fight was over.[1]

> Bassa's Churches! There rests to-night,
> There ends, there shrinks within himself,
> He, that was the Shelter in battle;
> . . . Heart of the men of Argoet.
> Bassa's Churches are lovely to-night,
> Their clover hath made them so;
> Ruddy are they; overflowing my heart!

Then he turns to describe Uriconium, its gracious site, its pastures and ploughed lands, now stained with blood, its lusty young warriors, its gray and grave warriors, all lost and overthrown; and, though it is not English poetry, yet I quote a few of its stanzas because it is Welsh poetry concerning an English battle —

> The White Town in the bosom of the wood!
> There has ever been of its lustyhood,
> On the surface of the grass, the blood.
>
> The White Town in the country-side!
> Its lustyhood, — its gray thoughtfulness —[2]
> The blood under the feet of its warriors.
>
> The White Town in the Valley!
> Joyful its troop with the common spoil of battle;
> Its people are they not gone?
>
> The White Town between Tren and Trodwyd!
> More common was the broken shield
> Coming from battle than the evening ox.[3]
>
> The White Town between Tren and Traval!
> More common was the blood
> On the surface of the grass than the ploughed fallow!

I have drawn attention to this poem, and to the distinct quality of its poetry, that we may, by placing a Welsh poem into relation with the English, realise that the Welsh literature began even in the sixth century to affect the English south of the Dee. The Celtic imagination began to influence the Teutonic. The same thing may be said, and with greater propriety, of the Northumbrian English and the Celts, but while that is

[1] The translation is Dr. Guest's. It will be seen by those who will refer to his essay how largely I am here indebted to him (*Origines Celticae*, vol. ii. p. 290, etc.). Nothing can be more vivid and interesting than his discussion of the poem.

[2] Its gray-headed seniors.

[3] Returning from pasture.

more or less understood, the necessary influence of the Welsh on English song along the marches from Chester to the Bristol Channel has not been sufficiently considered. I believe that this influence, when English literature again arose after the Conquest, was a very powerful one, but even now its elements must have begun to work. Both English and Welsh were singing folk; both chanted their battles; among both, the kings and nobles had bards; and the same kind of rewards — horses, lands, collars, and the rest — were given to the poets of both folk. When alliances were made between Welsh and English, the poets of each people must have met and sung together. When war was not going on, intercommunion of the two peoples would have been frequent along the march. Travelling singers would cross the border to and fro, going from village to village, from farm to farm. The literary men of England, not so very long after this time, corresponded with Welsh kings. Ealdhelm writes a letter to Geraint of Devon, in which he called him the glorious lord of the western realm.

As to the alliances, they began to be made shortly after this overthrow of the White Town. Ceawlin himself, its destroyer, was utterly overthrown in 591 by the Hwiccas in alliance with the Welsh. The house of Ælla, on the fall of Deira, took refuge, at least so it seems from Welsh tradition, with the King of Gwynedd, and Æthelfrith's fear that this alliance of the Deirans and the Welsh would be too much for him in Northumbria, was the cause of his desperate attack on Chester in 613.[1] In 631 Penda leagued himself with Cadwallon, King of Gwynedd, against Eadwine. These instances, which might be multiplied, are enough; they prove that there must have been intercommunion of the poetical work of both peoples. This is still plainer when we think that in the later wars, waged by the West Saxons against the Britons, the Welsh were not, as of old, exterminated, but were allowed to settle down after conquest among the English, and were acknowledged as citizens, as living under the king's peace. "They could hold," says Freeman, "landed property, their blood had its price, their oath its ascertained value."

Welsh settlers then, we may be sure, brought with them Welsh poetry. Even the unsubdued Welsh, during times of peace, lived with the English in much the same way as the English and Scots of the Borderland lived with one another — in the constant association of raiding and fighting, but at

[1] 607 is the date of the battle of Chester in the *Chronicle*, but the *Annales Cambriae* date it 613, and Dr. Guest thinks this is probably the true date.

the same time with an occasional interchange of mirth, of singing, and now and then, it may be, of intermarriage. As time went on, this literary intercommunion would increase till the prohibition of the Welsh crossing the border was enforced. In fact all along the marches from Chester to the Bristol Channel, and along the eastern border of West Wales, there was enough motion to and fro of the life of both peoples to produce so much communion between their poetry as would arise from the singers of one people hearing the singers of the other. The English influence on the Welsh is inappreciable; but the Welsh poetry, being of a higher imaginative type, would be certain to influence the English poetry. It is not unimportant even at this early time to notice that the first English poem of literary quality after the Conquest was made by Layamon, whose home was at Areley, in Shropshire, and whose subject was British; that the "Pearl," the loveliest of Middle English poems, was probably written in Lancashire, and is full of Celtic colour; and that the first English lyrics — like "Sumer is ycomen in" — were, I believe, born upon the Welsh border of Mercia.

These things being said, there remains nothing more to be usefully written in this place concerning the interests of English literature in Southern England. It is true that with the arrival of Augustine, Roman literature entered Kent with Christianity. But it was not English, and it was not till the year 669–671 that even Latin learning took root in Canterbury and spread over the West Saxon realm. The history of that belongs to another chapter.

We turn now to the Angles and their conquest of Middle and Northern England, and touch on the few points which in their wars are linked to literature, and as we have carried Southern England up to 670, so we carry this Engle history up to the same date. It is perhaps necessary to apologise for introducing an historical sketch into a history of literature, but it is better, I think, that my readers should have some image of the divisions of England in their mind's eye, and especially understand the original, certainly the literary, apartness — even though they were at root one people — of the Northumbrians and West Saxons. Moreover a great number of the right answers to literary problems depends on the history and geographical distribution of the peoples among whom the literature in question arises, and even minor matters or side issues of history enable us to guess with a greater probability the causes of literary movements. For example,

the persistency of York as a city, and the long continuance of heathendom in Mercia — which belong to the story of the conquests of the Angles, have a remote but distinct bearing upon the English literature in Northumbria.[1]

The Angles, then, the third tribe of the English on the Continent, were the last to leave for the shores of Britain. When they started we do not know, but it was probably early in the sixth century. Ship followed ship, during a period of years, for the shores of our island, till the whole of the Angles had left their original country. In that they were different from the two other English tribes. The greater part of the Jutes remained behind in the fifth century, and, mingled up with the Danes, came afterwards with them to England. As to the Saxons, it was only their overflow that entered Britain. But when the emigration of the Angles was over, their native land was left uninhabited. Their exodus was like that of the Israelites from Egypt. The women and children came away; the implements of farm and household were carried with them, their cattle also and their slaves. Not a hoof was left behind. The *Chronicle* says: "From Angle, which has *ever since remained a waste*, between the Jutes and Saxons, came the men of East Anglia, Middle Anglia, Mercia, and all Northumbria," and Baeda bears the same testimony. I cannot help thinking that this unity of the Angles had something to do with the rise of vernacular literature in the north rather than in the south of England.

Those nearest the seaboard left first, and they descended on the "last unconquered remnant of the Saxon shore" — the line of coast between the Orwell and the Wash. These, when they settled, called themselves the North folk and the South folk, and were probably two distinct bands from different parts of Engle. The country they seized came to be called East Anglia. Part of them, or a new band, pushed northward along the coast to the Fens about the Wash, then northward still, east of the Wolds, as far as the Humber, and these were called the Gyrwas, and the Lindiswara. Another expedition of the Angles, finding the coast of our Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincoln occupied, landed on the flat of Holderness and fought until nearly the whole of our East Riding was in their hands. Pressing still farther through a fertile land, studded with villas

[1] It will be plain that I have followed, in the historical part of this chapter, not any work of my own, but the work done by Mr. Green, Mr. Skene, Mr. York Powell, Professor Freeman, Dr. Guest and others, and I trust that no mistakes of mine may wrong these honoured names.

and rich with cattle, they stormed York, marched on to Aldborough, and were then stopped in their westward progress by the great forest of Elmet. But they won the coast as far as the Tees. This was the land of Deira, and the whole British population were driven out of it to die in the woods and in the caves of the rocks in utter misery and starvation. The great Roman towns were sacked and ruined. The rich villas of the meadows of the Derwent were burnt to the ground. It was like the passage of the Chimaera over the hamlets of Lycia. Nevertheless, a hundred and fifty years later, the centre of European learning was at York, and the descendants of these ravishing and burning warriors civilised the coast and filled the river valleys with monasteries in which were born, cradled, and nurtured the arts and sciences of Northern and Midland England. It may be that York, the "city of the Cæsars," was not so absolutely ruined as the rest. It was almost too big to ruin. At any rate it did not long remain a desolation. Early in the seventh century it was again a city, and a royal city, the capital of Eadwine. If it be possible that any of the Roman learning was preserved during a milder conquest, the fact would be another reason for the quicker rise and longer continuance of English literature in Northumbria. Big towns cherish and preserve literature. Even when the Danes came to York, they came more to settle than to destroy, and whatever literature was saved in Northumbria from the Danish horror was saved at York.

While Deira was being made, another band of Angles had entered the broad estuary of the Forth, and landing on its southern bank — where they may have heard of their Frisian or Jutish cousins, whom a certain tradition brings there long before this time — fought their way westward as far as the future site of Edinburgh, and turning round it, marched still westward as far as the valley of the Clyde, and southward till they reached the Tweed. After this the Angles drove their way southward, across the Tweed, and it is here that we come on the first known date in their conquests. Ida, whom his foes called the Flame-bearer, began to rule in 547, and during the twelve years of his reign made his way into our Northumberland, seized on the basaltic rock of Bamborough seated like a couchant lion on that stormy shore, enclosed it with a hedge and then a wall; and from that fortress he and his descendants won the land westward to Cumberland and southward to the Tees. When this was accomplished men called the country from the Forth to the Tees and from the edge of

Cumbria to the eastern coast, Bernicia. In 588 Bernicia and Deira became one kingdom under Æthelric, and the name of the whole from the Forth to the Humber was Northumbria. This is the kingdom which for reasons we can only conjecture became the home of original literature in England.

Meanwhile the Angles who had settled down in Lincolnshire, pushed inland no doubt by new arrivals from their fatherland, penetrated by the valley of the Trent to the place where Nottingham now sits on the river and then to our Leicester, and the settlement of Middle England began. The Gyrwas south of the Lindiswara in the Fen country, and other Angle bands fought their path southward and westward, and the shires (loosely speaking) of Huntingdon, Cambridge, and Northampton, were first their prey and then their place of rest. These became the South Engle.

While this was being done the West Engle, moving north of these conquests, passed through the upper part of the present shire of Nottingham into the Peak country of Derbyshire, and then wheeling to the south, and leaving the Middle English and the South English on their left, occupied the belt of country between the Middle English and the South English on one hand, and the borders of our Shropshire and Cheshire on the other, going as far south as the forest of Arden. Afterwards since they lived on the Marches nearest to the Welsh, they came to be called the Mercians. These conquests finished the work of the Engle in central Britain in the latter half of the sixth century.

There were now seven little kingdoms in England, but some years later Æthelfrith, king of Northumbria (593–617), joined all these kingdoms under his one sway, with the exception of Kent then ruled by Æthelberht, and I must hereafter draw attention to this Northumbrian glory as one of the possible causes of native literature being more fully developed in Northumbria than elsewhere in England. He was a mighty man, and having first at Daegsastan (Dawston in Liddesdale) beaten so completely the Scots who invaded him, that they were for a long time forced into quiet, he went into the Welsh country in 613, fought a fierce battle near Chester, and seized the town, the surrounding lands, and the sea-coast at the mouth of the Dee.

This conquest of his cut off Cumbria from North Wales, as the battle at Deorham had cut off West Wales from our South Wales. At two points then the English had reached the sea, at Chester and at our Bristol, and the Welsh were now split

asunder into three kingdoms, the kingdom of Devon and Cornwall, the kingdom of our Wales, and the kingdom of Cumbria, which extended from the Ribble to the Clyde. Afterwards the western frontier of Mercia was drawn from the mouth of the Wye to the Dee, and the river Tone was made by Ine the frontier between Wessex and West Wales, but the conquest was now practically finished, and the English settled down to till the lands they had won.

With the Middle English and Mercians literature has up to this date nothing to do, nor indeed has Northumbria much to do with it. The only thing needful to remark is that the wars in and about Northumbria between the Angles and the Britons, and during the whole of the period of which we are writing, were, according to Mr. Skene, the source of a number of Welsh poems which we have, much altered, in manuscripts, the earliest of which are of the twelfth century; and that the Welsh and English were nearer to one another and more mingled in Northumbria than they were on the March or on the border of West Wales.[1] We have no trace of poetry among the English during the years of the conquest of Northumbria. But there are several instances during the wars between the battle of Chester in 613 and the overthrow of Penda in 655 which prove that the war-song was still going on.

The first belongs to the battle between Æthelfrith of Northumbria and Raedwald, King of the East Angles, in 617. A line of poetry from some old song is quoted by the chroniclers, Henry of Huntingdon, Roger of Wendover, and others —

With the blood of Angles Idle's stream was foul,[2]

and the description given by Huntingdon, as well as by the rest, induces us to believe that they had before them some early English account of the battle in verse. The troops advance with fluttering standards, bristling spears, — phrases which

[1] The Welsh, it is true, settled down with the English under Ine, and the same mixture took place when the Wessex frontier was pushed on as far as the Tamar; it is also true that when Offa extended the Mercian frontier the Welsh and the English settled down together in the new land which the English won — and both these facts are of importance for our literary history; but the mixture between Welsh and English in the North was longer in time, more complete, and its frontier more extended than it was in Mercia and Wessex.

[2] It is probable that short historical records like this in poetry, as well as others in rude prose (such as the pre-Christian entries in the *Chronicle*), were written down in the runic characters which came to Britain with the English, and were preserved on oak, beech, alder, or birch frames, perhaps like those later "Bardic frames" from Wales, which Dr. Guest describes (*Origines Celticae*, vol. ii. p. 161).

are, however, more Latin than English. Æthelfrith rushes on the foe as if he had "found a prey." In 633 King Eadwine was slain by Cadwallon and Penda at Heathfield, and Henry of Huntingdon repeats the same phrase — one perhaps of the conventional phrases of Anglo-Saxon poetry — "The plain of Hethfeld reeked red from end to end with a river of the blood of Æthelings; a place of sudden woeful slaughter of the bravest warriors." In 634 Oswald, the most Christian king, met the forces of the leader of the Britons at Denises-burn, and another fragment of an old song tells us that "the corses of men of Cadwallon choked the Dennisburn." But Penda had his way at Maserfeld in 642, and slew Oswald; whence "it is said," writes Huntingdon, "the plain of Maserfeld was white with the bones of the Saints." At last, in 655, Penda the Strong was made weak by Oswiu, and the "earth was wet with his blood and the ground splashed with his brains." The battle was fought near the river Winwaed, which, swollen over its banks with excessive rain, destroyed, as they fled from the field, more of the heathen men than fell by the sword. So great was the deliverance (and we hear, as we read of it, the song of another deliverance of the same kind — "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon") — that it was celebrated in a battle song of which the Norman chroniclers retained three lines —

> At the Winwede was vengéd the war-death of Anna,
> The slaughter of kings — of Sigbert, of Ecgrice;
> The death of King Oswald, the death of King Edwin.

In 658 Cenwealh, the West Saxon king, fought a great battle at Pen in Dorsetshire against the Welsh, and the account of the Norman chronicler has it in the character of poetry. When the fight was joined the English yielded, but they feared flight more than death, and stood to their arms. "Then weary grew the Welsh, their strength melted away like snow; they fled from Pen even to Pedred, and cureless was the wound given there to the children of Brut." It seems doubtful if all of these have an origin in Anglo-Saxon songs, especially the last, which looks as if it had a Briton lay as its source. Yet the three lines concerning the flight at Winwaed are enough to prove that the Norman chroniclers had some English lays before them when they prepared their history.

This brings the remnants of English literature, seen, it is true, in mere flights of song, up to 670, which is about the date of the first Christian poem, of Caedmon's song of the Creation;

and which is also the date of the true beginning of Latin literature in the south, at Canterbury. A more detailed account of the influences which in Northumbria preceded and influenced the beginning at Whitby of a vernacular poetry, is reserved to a later chapter. Meanwhile, of what kind was the life these warriors and settlers lived? What did they think as they went to war, and as they struck in battle? How did they feel when they settled down to agriculture, when they built their homesteads, and when they drank together in the hall? What kind was the scenery among which they lived? What did they think and feel concerning the sea on which they sailed, and the storms which roared upon their coasts? Have we any record in their literature of these matters? Does their literature disclose to us their character, their emotions, their thoughts in war, at home, and on the ocean? These are the questions which the following chapters will attempt to answer. Before they were land-dwellers they were warriors, and we will begin with war.

CHAPTER VIII

ARMOUR AND WAR IN POETRY

In the earliest poems of the English we have already seen something of their customs of war, and of the armour they used. War was one of their chief businesses, and being knit up with courage, self-sacrifice, scorn of death, contention against fate, faithful comradeship, rescue of the weak, defence of the kinsfolk and the land, the praise of women, the worship of the gods, glory after death, reverence for ancestors, romantic adventure and other ideal matters, became naturally one of the great subjects of song. Everything pertaining to it was clothed in imaginative dress. The body-armour, the weapons, and chiefly the sword, were glorified. The war-smiths, especially as forgers of the sword, were garmented with legend, and made into divine personages. Of these Weland is the type, husband of a swan maiden, and afterwards almost a god. Battle, as in Homer, was attended by immortal creatures, — among the Norsemen by the shield-women — the choosers of the slain — by evil and good spirits among the English, and by Wyrd herself, the mistress of them all. The meeting of the warriors in fight — the wielding of the sword, the darting and pushing of the spears, the shield wall as it drove its way into the mass of the foe, the shower of arrows, the challenges of the warriors as they fought, the crashing and shouting, the way the armour behaved under the blows, were one and all adorned with metaphor; and every poet, while using the terms that had become conventional and which the guests in the hall expected, strove to add something of his own, or to express in a new fashion the well-known forms of description. Then, around the battle, and following it, like minor beings of fate and slaughter, were the birds and beasts that prey upon the slain — the eagles of the woods and of the sea, the kite and the hawk of the rocks, the raven, the carrion crow, the wolf, and the hill fox. These, screaming, croaking, howling, sang

the "horrid song" of death, and their omens often foretold the issue of the fight.

An English warrior went into battle with a boar-crested helmet, and a round linden shield, with a byrnie of ring mail (or in the case of the poorer sort a cloth or leather coat, often covered with flakes of iron or horn), with two javelins or a single ashen spear some eight or ten feet long, with a long two-edged sword naked or held in an ornamental scabbard and a great knob at the head of the hilt. In his belt was a short, heavy, one-edged sword, or rather a long knife, called the seax, which was used for close quarters and for finishing a foe. Beowulf rips asunder the dragon with it, and Grendel's mother uses it on Beowulf in the struggle when he lies on the sand of the cavern. Some carried great axes, very heavy and long-handled; and the javelin, and bow with broad-headed arrows, especially among the thralls, were frequent weapons.

In the *Crafts of Men* we see the Smith at work on this armour: —

> One, a clever smith may for use in war,
> For the weapons' onset,[1] many (arms) make ready
> When he forges fast for the fighting of the warriors
> Either helm or hip-seax, or the harness of the battle,
> Or the sword sheer-shining, or the circle of the shield
> For to fix it firmly, 'gainst the flying of the spear.
>
> *Crafts*, l. 61.

At times an iron-bound club was carried, but the sword was the special weapon of all the nobler sort. It was also the noblest of all the pieces of armour, and it was fame for a smith to have forged one that would last, because of its fine temper, from generation to generation. If its maker was not known, and it was of the finest quality, its origin was referred to the elves, the dwarfs, or the giants. Magic runes were engraved on the blade by the smith, it was damasked, spells were muttered over it; it seems sometimes to have been dipped, when red hot, in blood, or in a broth of poison-twigs. The hilt was wrought with wires of gold, silver, or iron, interwoven like writhing snakes. Sometimes a blood-painted serpent, as in the Icelandic lay of Helgi and Swava, lay above the edges or on the ridge of the sword, whirling its tail round the hilt. Such a sword received a name of its own, and had, as it were, a living spirit in it that sorrowed and rejoiced.

Swords of this kind are named in *Beowulf;* "hard-edged

[1] I have translated *waepenþracu*, not *waepenþraege*.

and wonderful, damascened, and adorned with jewels," — Hrunting, Naegling, and the sword of the cave, — but of all these enough has been said. We touch on the proper literature of the sword in one of the *Riddles* of Cynewulf, where it is finely personified. Cynewulf conceives it as itself a warrior, wrapped in its scabbard as in a coat of mail; going, like a hero, into the battle; hewing a path for its lord into the ranks of the foe; praised in the hall by kings for its great deeds; and strangest of all, and most poetical (unless Prehn be wrong, from whom I take this explanation),[1] mourning when the battle is over, for its childless desolation, for the times when it was innocent of wars, for the anger with which the women treat it as the slaughterer of men. The power with which Cynewulf enters into the life of the things he treats of can scarcely go further, but this is not apart from Teutonic thought, which conceived a living being in the sword.[2] Here is the riddle. The Sword speaks: —

I'm a wondrous wight for the warstrife shapen;
By my lord beloved, lovelily adorned:
Many coloured is my corslet, and a clasping wire
Glitters round the gem of Death which my Wielder gave to me:
He who whiles doth urge me, wide-wanderer that I am,
With himself to conquest.
Then I carry treasure,
Gold above the garths, through the glittering day;
I of smiths the handiwork! Often do I quell
Breathing men with battle edges! Me bedecks a king
With his hoard and silver; honours me in hall,
Doth withhold no word of praise! Of my ways he boasts
'Fore the many heroes, where the mead they drink.
In restraint he lulls me, then he lets me loose again,
Far and wide to rush along; me the weary with wayfarings,
Me the stout in battle. . . .
. . . Ranging largely, I'm a foe,
Cursed of all weapons. Riddle, xxi.

He is cursed of them, for he breaks through armour and beats down the spear and axe, but he pays the penalty. "No son have I," so mourns the Sword, "who shall avenge me;" his fate is, if he shape the work of war, never to have a bride, and the woman, whose joy he has lessened (by slaying her

[1] *Composition und Quellen der Rätsel des Exeterbuches*, to which, both in the translation and explanation of the *Riddles*, I am throughout indebted.

[2] Eusebius, Ealdhelm, and Tatwine have all written riddles on the sword. Cynewulf has most followed the first; but Cynewulf adds all the imaginative work. It is he alone who represents the sword as a warrior, wearing armour of his own, showing his lord the way through the battle, and when the war is over, mourning like a shattered veteran over his lonely future.

lover ?), speaks to him words of reviling, strikes him with her hands, and sings to him an evil song. "I take no heed," she cries, "of the battle."

Another portion of the sword is also described, when Cynewulf, making a riddle on the scabbard, tells of its fourfold wood; and then, in his fancy, likens the sword-hilt to the Cross of Christ that overthrew the gates of Hell, and to the gallows tree on which the Outlaw is hung.

> In the hall I saw, where the heroes drink,
> Borne above the floor, four, in kind, of things: —
> Wondrous wood-tree, woven gold,
> Treasure skilful-wrought, and of silver part; —
> Image of his Cross who of it for us to Heaven
> Lifted up a ladder, ere he of Hell's dwellers
> Broke the burg asunder. Of this beam can I
> Easily, before the earls, tell the ancestry —
> There was yellow holly, and the yew, the hard tree,
> And the oak and maple. To the Æthelings
> All of them were useful. One the name they had —
> "Wolf-head's tree." Riddle lvi.

The English Shield was circular, with a polished or gilded boss of metal, under which lay the aperture for the hand. *Rand sceal on scylde — faest fingra gebeorh* ("a boss shall be on the shield, firm refuge for fingers"). The woodwork was of yellow linden, covered with the skins of wild animals, fixed to the linden-board with studs, and strengthened with circular or intersected bands of iron, gilt or painted; and there may have been sometimes nailed on it the figure of a boar or the sacred animal of the family. Our nearest likeness to it is the Highland targe —

> There's brass on the target of barkened bull-hide,
> There's steel in the scabbard that dangles beside;
> The brass shall be burnished, the steel shall flash free,
> At a toss of the bonnet of bonny Dundee.

The shield is also personified by Cynewulf; but as its work in the battle is to bear strokes rather than to give them, it complains more than the sword. It is "sick of battles, no physician can heal its wounds, always it must endure the deadly strokes of swords." As we read, we feel the spirit speaking in the shield, and are even touched with pity,[1] so well does Cynewulf do this work —

[1] The contrary view is given in the parallel riddle by Ealdhelm. There, the shield is a soldier proud of his wounds —

> Quis tantos casus, aut quis tam plurima leti
> Suscipit in bello crudelis vulnera miles?

I am all alone, with the iron wounded,
With the sword slashed into, sick of work of battle,
Of the edges weary. Oft I see the slaughter,
Oft the fierceful fighting. Of no comfort ween I, —
So that, in the battle-brattling, help may bring itself to me ;
Ere I, with the warriors, have been utterly fordone.
But the heritage of hammers[1] hews adown at me,
Stark of edges, sworded-sharp, of the smiths the handiwork,
On me biting in the burgs ! Worse the battle is
I must bear for ever ! Not one of the Leechkin,
In the folk-stead, could I find out,
Who with herbs he has then should heal me of my wound !
But the notching on my edges more and more becomes
Through the deadly strokes of swords, in the daylight, in the night.
Riddle vi.

The same self-pity for its hard fate, which we find here in the shield, is also found in the riddle on the head-piece of the Helmet. Like the Antlers of the stag, in the 88th riddle, it complains of the bitter weather.

Wretchedness I bear ;
Wheresoe'er he carries me, he who clasps the spear !
On me, still upstanding, smite the streams (of rain) ;
Hail, the hard grain (helms me), and the hoar-frost covers me ;
And the (flying) snow (in flakes) falls all over me.
Riddle lxxix. 6–10.

In the same way the Spear (R. lxxii.) mourns that it was taken away from the field (as a sapling of the forest land) where earth and heaven nourished it; that its nature has been changed, and forced to bow to the will of a murderer. Yet, as it learns to know its master better, it sees that he is no murderer, but one who will fulfil a noble fame. Then the spear changes its thought, and it is proud of its small neck and fallow sides, when the glow of sunlight glitters on its point, and the warrior bedecks it with joy, and bears it on the war-path with a hand of strength upon its shaft, and knows its ways in battle.[2]

[1] That which is left after the hammer work is done, — *homera lâfe*, i.e. "the sword."

[2] *Gar* is the usual word for "spear" — (gar-Dene = spear Danes). *Gar* was the javelin armed with two of which the warrior went into battle, and which he threw over the "shield-wall." It was barbed, but the other, shaped like a leaf, without a barb, was called the "*spere*," the lance, concerning which is Cynewulf's Riddle. This was shod on the top of the handle with a heavy metal ball to give it weight, just as the sword was. There are other names for the weapon. "*Franca*" is the javelin which, in the battle of Maldon, is whirled through the neck of a warrior. "*Waelsteng*" is the deadly shaft or stake of the spear, and poetry uses it for the spear itself. "*Daroð*" is a dart, and "*daroðaesc*" an ashen spear; *ord* is the spear point. The shafts of all these weapons were of ash, and the poets came to call the spears "ashes,"

In the same way the Battering Ram wails for its happy life as a tree in the forest, and for all it suffered when it was wrought by the hands of man; yet at the end, like the spear, it boasts itself of its deeds of war, of the breach it has made for the battle-guest to follow, of the plunder which they take together.

I beheld a tree in woodland, towering on high,
Branchèd brilliantly; and its bole abode in joy.
Wood that waxed each day! Water and the Earth
Fed it faithfully, till far gone in days,
To another state it came, a most unhappy state.
Deeply was it down-stabbed, dumb was it in bonds,
O'er its wounds enwreathed, and with woful trappings
In the front 'twas fretted. For another false one,
For another battle guest, through the beating of its head,
Does it ope the way. Oft do these together
Ravage ragingly the treasure. Fast and restless[1] then
Was its follower to follow, when the first had cleft its path!
None into the narrow strait now would dare to venture.
Riddle liv.

There is a very different tone in the riddle that represents the Bow. The personification is just as vivid, but where the shield mourns, the bow exults. His force as a warrior, his slaughter of the foe, the deadly poison of his shafts are sung with a savage joy.

A. G. O. F. is my name, turned the other way;
And a wight well wrought am I, for the war enshapen —
If it hap I bend myself, and from out my bosom fareth
Venomous an (adder) sting — then I'm all on fire
Far from me to drive away a very death to life.
Whensoe'er my master, who has made me for that woe,
Lets aloose my limbs, I am longer than before,
Till I spit out from me, with death-sorrow blended,
That all-baleful poison that I erst uptook.
Nor shall any of the men easily escape,
Not a warrior of them all, from what I then outcry!
. . . . . .
. . . Then a drink of death he buys —
(Brimming) sure the beaker that he buys with life! —
If I am unbounden, I obey no man;
Only when with skill I'm strung — Say what is my name!
Riddle xxiv.

Two other riddles belong to war — one on the Coat of mail, the other on the Horn. The first brings the iron from which

and the warriors who bore them the "ash-bearers" (*Genesis* 2041). Hrothgar says that he has guarded his folk for fifty years with ashes and edges, with spear and sword. — *Beowulf* 1773.

[1] Ragingly = most rapidly; restless = unwearied. Ealdhelm has a riddle on the Battering Ram which Cynewulf had before him.

the rings are wrought out of the bosom of the earth, out of the dewy meadow-land, just as Ealdhelm, from whom the subject of the riddle is taken, says of his mail-shirt —

> Roscida me genuit gelido de viscere tellus,
> Non sum setigero lanarum vellere facta,
> Licia nulla trahunt, nec garrula fila resultant:

phrases which Cynewulf expands into poetry. But the most remarkable line is that in which, with a sudden return to pagan thought, he makes the mail-shirt say: "Me the snakes wove not through the crafts of Wyrds" — a line which takes us into the heart of ancient heathendom, but which returns in the next to the real worms of which he, with Ealdhelm, speaks, "Nec crocea Seres texunt lanugine vermes."

> Me the well-wet meadow, wonderfully frosty,
> Out of its inside, in old time brought forth —
> Of myself I wot not as enwrought of wooly fleeces,
> Nor of hairs through high-craft of my heart a-thinking.
> I have no enwoven woof, nor a warp have I,
> Nor resounds a thread of mine, through the smiting of the loom,
> Nor the shuttle shoots through me, singing (as it goes).
> Nor shall ere the weaver's beam[1] smite from anywhere (on me)!
> Me the Worms did not weave through the crafts of Wyrds,
> Those who gloriously[2] the golden, godlike web bedeck.
> Yet before the Fighters, far along the Earth,
> Many a man doth name me — "marvellous delightful Weed."[3]
>
> Riddle xxxvi.

The riddle on the *Horn* which begins the life of the thing from the bull, the "weaponed warrior" of the text, is even more vigorous than that on the war-shirt, and describes the doings and uses of the horn in war and peace.

> I a weaponed warrior was! Now in pride bedecks me
> A young serving man all with silver and fine gold,

[1] The word is *am*, which Grein translates as a "weaver's beam," but Bosworth and Toller, "the reed or slay of the weaver's loom."

[2] "With adornments."

[3] At Benty Grange, in Derbyshire, an Anglo-Saxon barrow, opened in 1848, contained a coat of mail. "The iron chain work consists of a large number of links of two kinds, attached to each other by small rings half an inch in diameter; one kind flat and lozenge-shaped about an inch and a half long, the others all of one kind, but of different lengths, varying from four to ten inches. They are simply lengths of square rod iron with perforated ends through which pass the rings connecting them with the diamond-shaped links; they all show the impression of cloth over a considerable part of the surface."— *Grave Mounds*, Jewitt, p. 254.

This seems to have been an ordinary mail-shirt, roughly made; but there were others, worn by the great leaders, and forged of as delicate links as that which Harry Wynd sold to Conachar's foster-brother.

With the work of waving gyres! Warriors sometimes kiss me;
Sometimes I to strife of battle, summon with my calling
Willing war-companions! Whiles, the horse doth carry
Me the march-paths over, or the ocean-stallion
Fares the floods with me, flashing in my jewels —.
Often times a bower-maiden, all bedecked with armlets,
Filleth up my bosom; whiles, bereft of covers,[1]
I must, hard and headless, (in the houses) lie!
Then, again, hang I, with adornments fretted,
Winsome on the wall where the warriors drink.
Sometimes the folk fighters, as a fair thing on warfaring,[2]
On the back of horses bear me; then bedecked with jewels
Shall I puff[3] with wind from a warrior's breast.
Then, again, to glee feasts I the guests invite
Haughty heroes to the wine — other whiles shall I
With my shouting save from foes what is stolen away,
Make the plundering scather flee. Ask what is my name!

Riddle XV.

There is no riddle on the helmet, only on the Vizor of the helm, but we have many a slight description of it throughout ancient English poetry. "Grima," which is the mask, the vizor, was used as a name for the whole helmet and included the crest, when there was a crest. The grinning face-covering, the ear-pieces, the projecting jut on the crown of the helm are frequently alluded to, and were adorned with incised or raised images of the boar. A helmet, found at Benty Grange, "has on its crown an elliptical bronze plate, supporting the figure of a boar — much corroded, carved in iron, with bronze eyes, — standing rampant like the crest of a knight." Such seems to have been the ornament of the helmets which the thegns of Beowulf wore when they approached Heorot. The translation I give of this obscure passage follows Professor Skeat's reading of the text.

O'er his glittering body,
High above the helmet's vizor, fire-hardened, gold-adorned,
Many-coloured, did the Boar hold the guard of life.

Beowulf, l. 303.

On Hnaef's funeral pyre is laid his helm — "a swine all golden, a boar iron hard!" When Beowulf plunges into the

[1] *Bordum* I do not take to be "on the tables," but *bordum behlyðed* — robbed of my covers, of the round tops, like shields, which shut down on the drinking horn, and were, because they were adorned with jewels and gold figures, wrenched away by the plunderers.

[2] Literally, "a fair war-ornament." I have translated it as above, because I want to give, in this place, the force of "fyrd," which is the militia; and here, I think, the levy *en masse* of the population for a war-expedition — the horn is part of the war-material, part of the ornamented things used in the Fyrd.

[3] *Swelgan* is literally "to swallow, drink in."

sea he sets his bright helmet on, adorned with jewels, circled round with a chieftain's chains,[1] which a weapon-smith in days of old had wrought and wondrously forged, beset with swine likenesses (here the boars seemed to be small, and fastened on like nails on the cheek-plates), "so that never after brand nor swords of battle should bite into it." Lastly, when Beowulf is telling his story to Hygelac, he bids be brought into the hall the "Boar head sign, the battle-steep helm."[2] Nor is it only in *Beowulf* we find the boar-helm. Later on it appears in Cynewulf's *Elene*. When Constantine lies dreaming in his tent, he wakes up "overcovered with the boar-sign," with his helmet. When the warriors of Helena land on the shores of Greece, "on every earl was seen a masked-helm, a costly boar-crest."

So were the warriors armed. They marched into the fight led by the king and chiefs, sometimes on foot, sometimes riding on horses, under their banners, their chain armour ringing, their long ashen spears in their hands, their swords by their sides, and around them their henchmen, armed also with sword and spears and shield, in close array. Before they joined battle, the leader spoke to his soldiers, throwing up his shield arm to call their attention.

'Fore the vanward of the warriors sprang the war-host leader;
Bold that promise-bringer was, his shield-board upheaved.
Exodus, ll. 252, etc.

Then the trumpets blew, and singing their war-songs and clashing their spears on their shields,[3] while the horses stamped the earth, the main body of freemen, wolves of the battle covered with their "vaulted shields," making a "shield-burg" as they went, a "breast-net" of men, marched forward and let fly their javelins and arrows above the yellow linden shields —

Then with boldness they
Letten forth be flying shower-flights of darts,
Adders of the battle, arrows hard of temper,
From the horn-curved bows. High aloud they shouted,
Warriors fierce in fighting, sending forth their spears
Through the host of hard ones. *Judith*, l. 220.

A passage in the *Christ* describes the same beginning of the battle —

[1] "Chains —" Gold links twisted like a coronet.

[2] See Kemble, *Saxons in England*, chapter on Heathendom, and Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*, chapter on Freyr, for the connection these and other writers establish between the Boar-sign and the golden boar which Freyr rode, and his worship.

[3] *Elene*, l. 50.

To another, luck in war
Gives he on the battle-ground, when the javelin shower
Sends the shooters forth o'er the shelter of the shield —
Flickering flight of arrows. *Christ*, l. 673.

All these expressions, and many more, of the glitter and rushing noise of battle are common phrases of the poets and reveal the joy and glory our forefathers had in war. Cynewulf paints the advance of the Franks and Huns —

Then (in battle byrnies) were the men of bravery
For the fight well fitted; flickered then the spears,
And the wreathen shirts of war. With war-words and shields,
Heaved they up their hosting banner. *Elene*, l. 22.

When Pharaoh's host draws nigh in the *Exodus*, this is what the Hebrews see coming up from the southways —

Then they saw,
Forth and forward faring, Pharaoh's war array,
Gliding on, a grove of spears; [1] glittering the hosts!
Fluttered there the banners, there the folk the march trod.
Onwards surged the war, strode the spears along, [2]
Blickered the broad-shields; blew aloud the trumpets.
Exodus, l. 155.

Around the march, on the battle-field, after the battle, the beasts and birds of war collected — the gray wolf, the swart raven, the dewy-feathered, horn-nebbed eagle, — choosers, like Valkyrie, of the slain. The first, and perhaps the finest, association of these war-creatures is in *Beowulf*. It is already translated, but I translate it again —

But the raven wan,
Eager o'er the fated, oftentimes shall speak.
Tell unto the earn how at eating he had sped,
When he with the wolf tore away the flesh of corpses.
Beowulf, l. 3024.

There is nothing better in the Anglo-Saxon poetry of war than this grim conversation. The wolf, the raven, and the eagle never become Christian in English song. They are just as savage in the later poems as they are in *Beowulf*, or in the fragment of the *Fight at Finnsburg*. When Pharaoh's host is on the march they accompany it all night, longing for the slaughter.

[1] *Oferholt wegan; oferholt* = "overwood." A parallel passage in *Beowulf* makes me translate it a "grove of spears"; otherwise it would be, "a cover, a shield."

[2] *Garas trymedon* — "the spears strengthened themselves;" "moved along like a wall" is perhaps the poet's thought; or, *spears* may mean the spearmen.

Wheeling round in gyres, yelled the fowls of war,
Of the battle greedy; hoarsely barked the raven,
Dew upon his feathers, o'er the fallen corpses;
Swart that chooser of the slain! Sang aloud the wolves
At the eve their horrid song, hoping for the carrion.
Kindless[1] were the beasts, cruelly they threaten;
Death did these march-warders, all the midnight through,
Howl along the hostile trail — hideous slaughter[2] of the host.
Exodus, ll. 161–168.

Then we see them while the battle is raging. This is the description in *Genesis* of the fight between Abraham and the Elamites —

So they rushed together — Loud were then the lances,
Savage then the slaughter-hosts. Sadly sang the wan fowl,
With her feathers dank with dew, midst the darting of the shafts,
Hoping for the corpses. Hastened then the heroes,
In their mighty masses, and their mood was full of thought.
. . . . Then was hard play there,
Interchanging of death-darts, mickle cry of war!
Loud the crash of battle! With their hands the heroes
Drew from sheaths their swords ring-hilted,
Doughty of the edges! *Genesis*, l. 1982.

Again we meet these beasts when the Hebrews go forth from Bethulia at the call of Judith. "The warriors hurried, heroes under helm, and bore the banner of victory forth at the breaking of the day. Sounded then the shields, starkly clanging —"

Then rejoiced the gaunt beast,
In the wood the wolf; and the raven wan,
Slaughter-greedy fowl! Surely well they knew
That the war thegns of the folk thought to win for them
Fill of feasting on the fated! On their track flew fast the earn,
Hungry for his fodder, all his feathers dropping dew;
Sallow was his garment, and he sang a battle lay;
Horney-nebbed he was. *Judith*, l. 205.

We meet them also on the march and in the battle in Cynewulf's *Elene*, when Constantine fights with the Huns.

Forth then fared the folk troop, and a fighting lay
Sang the Wolf in woodland, wailed a slaughter-rune![3]
Dewy-feathered, on the foes' track,
Raised the Earn his song. *Elene*, ll. 27–30.

[1] *Carleasan* is "without care or sorrow, reckless." I have ventured to make *cear* stand for "pity."
[2] I have repeated *fyll* in the translation.
[3] *Waelrune ne maþ*; literally, "hid not the slaughter-rune." The slaughter-rune was the howling of the wolves.

Loud upsang the Raven
Swart, and slaughter-fell. Strode along the war host;
Blew on high the horn-bearers; heralds of the battle shouted;
Stamped the earth the stallion; and the host assembled
Quickly to the quarrel! *Elene*, ll. 52–56.

At last the battle is joined, and Cynewulf is all pagan in his description —

Sang the trumpets
Loud before the war hosts; loved the work the raven:
Dewy-plumed, the earn looked upon the march;
. . . . Song the wolf uplifted,
Ranger[1] of the holt! Rose the Terror of the battle![2]
There was rush of shields together, crush of men together,
Hard hand-swinging there, and of hosts down-dinging,
After that they first encountered flying of the arrows!
On that fated folk, full of hate the hosters grim
Sent the showers of arrows, spears above the yellow shields;
Forth they shot then[3] snakes of battle
Through the surge of furious foes, by the strength of fingers!
Strode the stark in spirit, stroke on stroke[4] they pressed along;
Broke into the wall of boards, plunged the bill therein:
Thronged the bold in battle! There the banner was uplifted;
(Shone) the ensign 'fore the host; victory's song was sung.
Glittered there his[5] javelins, and his golden helm
On the field of fight! Till in death the heathen,
Joyless fell![6] *Elene*, l. 109.

One more example shows the birds of war gorged with carcases after the battle. Abraham in the *Genesis* vowing to the King of Sodom that he will not take scat or shilling from him,

[1] *Holtes gehleðða* — "comrade, indweller, of the holt."

[2] This phrase is like the picture of Terror and Strife and Rout in the 4th book of the *Iliad*.

[3] I repeat *forð onsendan* in the translation.

[4] *Stundum* is "at times," hence "eagerly." I have combined both meanings in *stroke after stroke*.

[5] I have put *his* in, because I think Cynewulf meant the Emperor's spears and helm.

[6] Nor does Cynewulf leave them there. The Huns are driven in flight to their camp, but are beaten from it. "Some, half alive, guarded their lives in the rocky cliffs, some Drowning" (like an evil witch), "seized on in the river stream." I have wondered as I read the description whether the poet may not have remembered, as he wrote, the fight where Penda fell, and the flooded waters of the river that swept away the Mercians and their king. "Then," he continues, "was the host of the brave-hearted rejoiced; they chased the stranger from break of day till evening fell. The snakes of battle, the ashen darts, flew after them. Few of the host of the Huns came back to their home. There it was seen that the King Almighty gave victory to Constantine, magnificence and dominion through His rood-tree." These are lines that may well resemble those sung after the fight of Winwaed by the bard of Oswiu. Did Cynewulf, more than a century afterwards, enshrine, under the victory of Constantine the victory of Oswiu; under the tale of the swollen Danube, the drowning of the host of Penda?

save that part which Aner and Mamre and Eschol have fairly won in the brunt of ashen spears, tells him that he need no longer disquiet himself concerning the Northmen.

For the birds of carrion,
All along the mountain ledges, sitting blood bedropt,
Crammed and glutted are with the corpse-flesh of the host.[1]

The picture of the vultures, thus sitting, dripping blood, on the ledges of the cliffs travels beyond the conventional description, of which we find another example in a war-song written when poetry had decayed, but which has attained a high reputation because it happens to be one of the few pieces of Anglo-Saxon poetry known to the Englishmen.

Behind them they left to have lust of the dead
Him of the sallow coat, him the swart raven,
Horny-nebbed fowl; and the ash-feathered one,
White-tailed, the earn, to rejoice in the carrion, —
And the greedy war-hawk, and that grizzled beast,
Wolf of the weald. *Brunnanburh*, l. 60–65.

[1] Under beorhhleoðum blôdig sittað
þeodherga wael þicce gefylled. *Genesis*, l. 2159.

"Under the precipices of the mountain" is, of course, on the ledges at the bases of the cliffs; *wael* is often the battle-field strewn with corpses, the whole slaughter of the fight; and "crammed and glutted" is to express the repetition of *þicce gefylled*.

CHAPTER IX

THE SETTLEMENT IN POETRY

When, after the year 613, the Conquest was practically complete, the English had settled down over all the open country into an agricultural life, family by family, kinsfolk by kinsfolk, collected into hamlets round the heads of their houses. They hedged and ditched their villages, built their farm-steads, each with its garth and outhouses, laid out the arable land and the meadow outside the hedge, organised their village government, and established the places where the folk met for religious worship and for council. As to the Roman-British cities which they had sacked and burned, these remained in ruins, to be haunted by the owl and the fox. A long time passed by before this agricultural people cared to live in towns. They were like the Douglas; they liked better to hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak.

There was no further war with the Welsh, except upon the marches of the north, west and south, or when a Welsh king like Cadwallon united his forces with a king like Penda against another English king. The wars which were now waged by the English were those of English king with English king for over-lordship. Even amidst these wars agriculture went steadily on, and the arts of peace were developed in home and village life. The English forged the ploughshare rather than the sword. They built weirs, and fished, and set up water-mills by the rivers.[1] Boat-building, brewing, leather-tanning, pottery, dyeing, weaving, the working of gold and silver, and embroidery, grew and soon began to flourish. The days of merchandise succeeded the days of piracy and plunder; life became gentler, nearer in spirit to the homes of England as we now conceive them. The main struggle was closed.

[1] *Mills.* — Corn was usually ground by the women in stone querns, but we find water-mills in a problematical charter of 838 (Ecgberht). "Et unam molinam in torrente qui dicitur holan beorges burna." — Earle's *Charters*, p. 288.

There are many records in Anglo-Saxon poetry which have to do with this daily life of the people — life inland, life on the seaboard, life on the sea, customs and manners, implements, hunting, tilling, and war. Of war and arms I have already written. This chapter and that which follows it are intended to bring forward such of these records as have a literary interest of their own, and will at the same time illustrate the English settlement as well as the English life on the sea. Most of them belong to a time when Christianity had been thoroughly established, but the manner of life and the matters mentioned in them were much the same in the sixth and seventh as in the eighth and ninth century. The fresh gentleness which Christianity added scarcely touches the things which are here discussed. Being thus independent of date, it is more convenient to bring these records together under such a title as — The settlement of the English, in poetry.

These records are found in short poems, such as the *Riddles* of Cynewulf, and in scattered lines in the midst of longer poems. To turn aside and notice them in the midst of the general history of literature would confuse the main narration. To omit them, on the other hand, would be to leave out some striking pieces of early English poetry. But I hope my readers will understand that these chapters are not intended to be a treatise on the Settlement, or an attempt to discuss all that pertains to the manners and customs of the English. Such a treatise belongs to the historian and the antiquarian, and has been admirably done by others. My object is to set in this framework the descriptions of the early English life, of its habits and way of thinking which are to be found in the poetry of Northumbria, and I shall not travel beyond this aim. I say the poetry of Northumbria, because I believe it was in that part of England that poets chiefly wrote; and the scenery, the manners, the spirit of the people described in such records as the *Riddles*, belong rather to the Angles than to the Jutes or Saxons.

Inland, then, in the seventh century, the Angles were settled along the rivers, on the plains overlooked by moor and down, by the sea, and among the fens. Their hamlets rose on the site of the Roman villas, on either side of the Roman roads, wherever the Romans had drained the marshes, in every fertile vale or plain where the provincials had cultivated the land. The masses of forest country, the moors and mountains were left unoccupied by this agricultural people and were haunted by giant and elf and monster. But when

the better sites were filled, the land, as the English pushed their advance by the water-paths, was cultivated up to the edge of the forest-waste, and day by day the axe and the plough wore their way into it and reclaimed it. The poorer and the more outcast set up their solitary huts on the banks and islands of the fens, and made a precarious living by fishing and trapping. They were, in fact, squatters; and it was only afterwards when pieces of the folk-land were allotted to the king's comrades and others that these men might come into employment on an estate.[1]

Of the kind of scenery among which these settlers in the fens lived we have a slight sketch in the sixty-first riddle of Cynewulf. It tells of a desert place near the shore, traversed by a channel up which the tide flowed, and where the reeds grew which were made into the *Reed-Flute*, which is the answer to the riddle. I translate the whole. The picture, at the end, of the lover talking in music to his sweetheart, music that none understood but she, is full of human feeling, but the point on which I dwell is the scenery. It is that of a settlement where only a few scattered huts stood amid the desolate marsh. Such, at first, were the homes of the Gyrwas among the fens. It is the Reed that speaks —

> On the sand I stayed, by the sea-wall near,
> All beside the surge-inflowing! Firm I sojourned there,
> Where I first was fastened. Only few of men
> Watched among the waste where I wonnèd on the earth.
> But the brown-backed billow, at each break of day,
> With its water-arms enwrapt me! Little weened I then,
> That I ere should speak, in the after days,
> Mouthless o'er the mead-bench. . . .
> Only for us two, utter boldly there,
> Message in my speech, so that other men
> Would not be aware[2] of my words to thee.

There is another passing sketch of the same kind of scenery in the twenty-third riddle, when men come riding to the sea-channels on war-horses. The flood is too deep, and the press of the tide between the steep banks too strong for their passage. They mount a strange wain, proudly carrying their spears on

[1] Kemble quotes a passage from a translation of St. Augustine's *Soliloquia*, which illustrates the text: "But it pleaseth every man, when he hath built himself some cottage on his lord's laen, with his assistance, for a while to take up his rest thereon, and hunt and fowl and fish, and in divers ways provide for himself upon the laen, both by sea and land, until the time when, by his lord's compassion, he can earn a bocland and eternal inheritance." — Kemble, vol. i. p. 312.

[2] Literally, "Should not repeat our words."

their gray war-stallions. The answer to the riddle is obscure (Prehn thinks it to be *the Month*), but the scenery is clear. It is of a broad, deep-ditched channel, the stream of which in the fen-lands meets the rough incoming of the tide.[1] Near such a place on the shore where it fell to the sea Cynewulf would see the sight he describes in another riddle, "wood enrotten, heaps of weed, lying, flung together, vilely on the earth"; and more inland, in the hollows of the earth, "the black-faced fen that smelt so evilly of filth, where the fen-frogs swiftly leaped into the dark water," where the Elk-sedge, as the *Rune Song* sings, "waxed in the water, wounding and burning" every man who touched it. We are brought into another part of the country, probably the borders of Cumbria, where in riddle lxxi. the Ox speaks, and tells how weary he was among the rough paths of the border moorland. "I was silent," the Ox says (and it is in Cynewulf's manner to sympathise in this fashion with the suffering and joy of animals); "I never told any man when the point of the goad was bitter to me, but I was

> "With the swart herdsman. Farther I journeyed,
> Wended Welsh marches, wandered the moors
> Bound 'neath a yoke-beam."

The swart herdsman is a Welsh slave. Swart is the usual epithet of the Welsh as against the fairer Englishman. In another riddle (xiii.) a "black-haired Welshwoman presses and shakes the ox-hide." Also in riddle liii. the "Welshwoman of dark tresses" carries to and fro the buckets from the well, and in another we hear of the "swart thegn with the dusky face" who works with the student in the monastery. Evidently in Northumbria there was a crowd of Welsh used as servants in the farmhouses and the convents of the eighth century.

A great part of the country was forest, that is, wood and wild land, heath and moor, and a supernatural terror brooded over it. In the moor-pools dwelt the water-elves, and in the wreathing mists and driving snow on the fells men saw mighty moor-gangers stalking, fiends of the lonely places, such as their fathers saw in the land from which they came. Grendelsmere was not a name given without reason. "The Thyrs"—that is the giant—"dwells alone in the fen," that is, in the morasses of the mountains. Dark elves haunted also the hills and moors. We hear of *beorg-aelfen*, *dun-aelfen*, *muntaelfen*. The howling of the wolves filled these waste hills at night, and many a wanderer,

[1] The stream shall in the waves, in the sea-floods mingle. — Gnomic Verses.

lost on them, was devoured. "Him shall the wolf eat," says the poem on the Fates of men, "the grizzly heath-tramper; his mother shall wail his death." In the caves of the moor-cliffs the outlaw lurked, as Grettir did in Iceland, and the British who fled from the sacking of the towns took refuge in them, and miserably starved and died. Sometimes in Christian times the hermit seeking a religious solitude exiled himself among these solitudes. The demons, who have taken the place of the giant and the elf, contend with him for the possession of these green hills which they grieve to leave, and reproach him bitterly for depriving them of their homes, as Caliban reproaches Prospero. In the same wild solitudes lived the Dragon of our forefathers' imagination, couched over his hoard of gold, terrible in the dreadful recesses of the cave —

Horridus horriferas speluncæ cumbo latebras —

a phrase of Eusebius which is not apart from the lines in the Gnomic Verses: "The Dragon will dwell in the barrow on the hill, old, and proud of his treasures." Even down to Shakspere ran the tradition —

> Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen
> Makes fear'd, and talk'd of more than seen.
> *Coriolanus*, Act iv. Sc. i.

The pathless woodland was, however, nearer to the life of the English than the moor. A great number of the settlements were on the outskirts of the wood forest. It was covered with beech [1] and oak, ash and maple, linden and birch. Alders clung to the banks of its streams and pools. A thick undergrowth of thorn and holly blocked it up and climbed the ledges of the cliffs within it, where the great birds of prey had their home. The English likened this vast covering of forests to curly locks upon the head and shoulders of Earth. In the Riddle on *Creation* Earth has no need of wimple or cape —

> For upon me wonderfully waxeth on my head,
> So that on my shoulders they may shimmer bright,
> Curly locks full curiously.

This is paralleled by the Icelandic imagery, and we ourselves may compare Keats' lovely phrase of the pines —

[1] Earle shows very good reason for his belief, not only that the beech existed in these times, but also the fir, though Cæsar had denied both these trees to Britain. Geologists would not agree with Cæsar, who must have been misinformed. — *Land Charters*, p. 474.

Those dark clustered trees
Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep.

The Yew, "an unsmooth tree, holding fast to the earth, a herd of the fire," grew in the wood and on the ridges of the hills. The oak woods fed men as well as swine, and the English saw in them the future ship — "the strength that would resist the sea." Wherever the birch grew, the English admired it. Even though it was fruitless it was beautiful. "High is its helm — 'tis decked out with beauty — laden with leaves — in touch with the air." [1] But the chief feeling with regard to the woods was dread. These were desperate solitudes where the "bitter worm-wood stood pale gray" (Cynewulf, R. xli.), and the "hoar stones lay thick." The horror of their sunless and murky depths was a superstitious horror. Giants also dwelt in them, and black elves. These claimed the forestland as their own and hated the spread of agriculture, as Grendel hated the sound of the harp and the joy of men in Heorot. There too at times were seen the light elves, in contrast with the black, and of exceeding beauty. Caedmon, describing the loveliness of Sarah, says she was "sheen as an elf" — but, light or dark, they were the natural foes of men. There were water-elves, who were, I presume, impersonations of the disease-striking powers of the forest-fen and marsh.[2] Most diseases were thought to be

[1] These phrases are from the *Rune Song*.

[2] I daresay the "water-elf disease," a leechdom for which I quote, for it contains an old verse-charm, was a boil and blain plague such as the elves of stagnant waters smite on men. Grimm thinks it a burning fever, and Fever is thought to be an elf who rides the man with whip and spur. "If a man" (here is the charm) "is in the water-elf disease, then are the nails of his hand livid and his eyes tearful, and he will look downwards. Give him for this a leechdom" (and many herbs are mentioned), "to be soaked in ale and holy water," and sing this charm over them thrice —

I have wreathed round the wounds,
The best of healing wreaths;
That the bane-sores may
Neither burn nor burst,
Nor find their way further,
Nor turn foul and fallow,
Nor thump and throb on.

Nor be wicked wounds,
Nor dig deeply down!
But he himself may hold
In a way unto health!
Let it ache thee no more
Than ear in earth acheth!

Say also this many times — "May Earth bear on thee with all her might and main." These charms a man may sing over a wound. Cockayne, whose translation is here given, conjectures that the phrase "May Earth," etc., "is meant to quell the Elf." Diseases, and no doubt the Elf that caused them, were frequently — in folk-tales — buried in the ground. One of the leechdoms, translated from Sextus Placidus, holds in it a remnant of the Teutonic belief in dwarfs as the cause of sickness. "*To do away a Dwarf*" (*i.e.* convulsions or ague caused by a Dwarf's possession). "Give the man the dung of a white hound pounded to dust, and baked into a cake, *ere the hour of the dwarf's arrival*, whether by day or night it be. His access is terribly strong, and after that it departeth." I may add to this note on elves and dwarfs that Ariel may

demoniac possessions, and this meant to the Christianised Englishman dwarf or elf-begotten. Other elves rode in the air and shot deadly arrows; and the Scotch phrases, "elf-arrows," "elf-bolt," "elf-flint," are survivals of the English dread. We might perhaps imagine that elves lived in the trees, for an English gloss translates Dryads by *wudu-aelfenne;* and in order to divert their capricious anger whole groves were sometimes dedicated to the elves. We hear, moreover, of the *wudu-maer*, the "wood nymph," "a record of the time," thinks Tylor, "when Englishmen believed, as barbarians do still, that the Echo is the voice of an answering spirit"; and the word *mare* for Spirit appears in an Anglo-Saxon charm as the Mare which harms a man. I conjecture also that the wild, hairy wood-sprites which we find in German and Norse legends were also part of our forefathers' forest-superstition, and that it was strengthened by the apparition now and again of a Welshman who had fled into the woods to dwell. The lines in the *Andreas* may refer to the poet's memory of a time when the woodland was as yet haunted by unsubdued bands of Welshmen, — "All the markland (*i.e.* the forestland) was with death surrounded, the snares of the foe." We certainly find in *Solomon and Saturn*, in a passage which Kemble thinks is redolent of heathenism, that the fiends "haunt unclean trees," and, "changing themselves into a worm's likeness, sting the neat and destroy the cattle going about the fields, and hew down the horses with horns" — verses which are a remnant of the way in which a farmer, living on the outskirts of the wood, would think, when any misfortune befell his cattle.

A far fiercer inmate of the wild wood was the Wolf[1]-man, the outlaw — the companion of the wolf of the wood. In these terrible solitudes he met his fate by starvation, by the wolves,

be compared with the sheen, the glittering elf of our forefathers. Ariel is the free wind of Heaven, whether in storm, or in play with the flowers or the sand of the seashore; and his music is the wind-music. A shoal of elves are his companions; and he has some power over the elements, over fire and air. Indeed his life is the life of the air. Such a life, rudely conceived, belonged to the Old English bright Elf. Ariel is not, as an Anglo-Saxon would have made him, a natural mischief-doer to man, but he does take pleasure in mischief and in plaguing men at Prospero's command; and though he is subdued by Prospero's magic to serve him, he is "not human," and has no sympathy with men. He is of the pure element alone. Even his desire for freedom is not human, but elemental — the desire to be wholly the unchartered air. The whole conception is more in harmony with Old English than with Celtic or French ideas of the elves. Indeed I may hazard the opinion that the fairies and elves of later England, of Shakspere and Milton and Shelley and many others, are not merely romantic but genuine English descendants of the sheen-bright elves of the Angles.

[1] The gallows is called in a Riddle of Cynewulf's the wolf-head's tree; and in the Middle Ages the outlaw was said to bear a wolf's head — *Caput lupinum.*

by losing himself, and by the "dark weather" in which English verse places the thief. There is a description of him in the Gnomic Verses — (Exeter MS.)

147. Friendless, doth a woeful man take him wolves for comrades;
Often does that comrade tear him, very crafty is the beast!
Of that gray one, dead-man's-grave, grisly fear shall be.
. . . . Never truly doth the gray wolf for his slaughtering weep,
For the murdering of men; but the more of it he wishes.

Sometimes the outlaw climbed a high tree to see his way or to escape the wolves, like the adventurous youth in the folk tales; and feeble, fell headlong. Caught in the boughs, he hung between heaven and earth till he died. Here is such a one sketched in the *Fates of Men* —

21. In the holt shall many a one from the high-topped tree
Featherless fall down; yet in flight shall he
In the lift still hover, till no longer he is held
Like a fruit upon the tree. Then to the root-stock
Sinks he, slowly dying, of his soul bereft;
Falleth on the field of earth! On a faring is his spirit.

At times he was seized, as he roamed the wood, by the outlying shepherds of some township, judged, and hung on the gallows, which seems, by some at least of the English families, to have been kept up at a little distance from the village in the forest. There he became the proper prey of the raven. "One shall on the wide-stretched gallows ride," sings the *Fates of Men*, "till his bloody corse shall be all broken up. Then shall the dark-coated raven take his eyes, nor shall his hands guard him from that thievery. Wan on the tree, he waits his weird, o'ershrouded with a death-mist. Outlaw is his name." Now and then, even a woman, driven from her home by her enemies, was forced to take refuge in the forest; and we have a picture of a wild place where such a one takes refuge, in the *Wife's Complaint* —

Men have garred me dwell in a grove of woodland,
Under an oak tree, hidden in an earth-cave.
Old is this earth-hall: I am all outwearied!
Dark are all the dens, high the duns above,
Bitter my burg-hedges, with the briars overwaxen,
A delightless dwelling . . . .
When in early dawn, all alone I go
Underneath the oak, round my earthly lair,
There I sit and weep all the summer-lengthened day. l. 27.

In the woods also were hosts of wild animals. Herds of wolves roamed through them, and so long did they last, and so

formidable was their increase, that they were not killed out in England till the end of the fourteenth century. The bear, the Teutonic king of beasts, was perhaps an unfrequent inmate of the caves, and was met upon the moor. "The bear will be on the heath old and terrible," says an early English verse.[1] The wild cat was numerous and formidable in the woods. The wild boar "strong with the strength of his tusk," wandered through the undergrowth and grew fat upon the acorn and the mast. In Cynewulf's Riddle on *Creation* he paints the beast in a few lines (Rid. xli.)

> And I am everywhere than a boar more daring,
> When he stands at bay, furiously enraging;
> . . . . . .
> Than a well-stuffed Swine am I stronger, am I fatter;
> Than a boar that grunts him in the beechen woods,
> Black, and rooting up — one that lived in joys.

Great herds of wild cattle also roamed the forest, and their huge horns were used for drinking cups, for blowing notes in battle, and for warning of approaching war. The loud roar of these horns, warning of the approach of a foe, was heard from village to village of the kinsfolk on the skirts of the forest. Some of the dark Celtic shorthorns probably lingered in the woods after the expulsion of their masters. They were the only domestic cattle known to Roman Britain. The large cattle with red ears, white bodies, and great horns, now represented by the Chillingham breed, were brought over in their ships by the English, and soon got into the woods. It is also possible that in the wilder woods there lingered scattered descendants of the Urus of the prehistoric period. Then, across the streams which traversed the woodland, the beaver built its dam and was trapped for its fur — we find them trapped even as late as the twelfth century. Concerning the stag, another wild dweller of the woods, we have two elaborate Riddles from Cynewulf (lxxxv., lxxxviii.). They are really concerning the stag-horns which were used to adorn the gables of the halls, and for the insertion into them of stone and iron weapons. Cynewulf makes one of the horns speak, and bestows upon it,

[1] "The Bear," says Boyd Dawkins (*Early Man in Britain*, p. 493), "has left no traces of his existence of a later date than the Roman occupation." Unless the passage quoted above and the other one in the Gnomic Verses be remnants of verses made on the continent — the bear was still in England during the *early* English occupation. The Gnomic Verses, 175, after describing how ill it is to live alone, illustrates this by saying how much better it is to have a brother if "they should meet a boar, or when together a bear." "That," he adds, as if he had known of it, — "that is a savage wild beast."

in his vivid manner, human pleasure and regret. "Full oft the holt covered us; the helm of forest trees shielded us against storms in the gloomy nights. Now I stand on wood at the end of a beam" (that is, at the end of the roof-ridge of a hall). "Brotherless, I keep my place at the end of the roof-board; my brother is not here. Where he is, who once beside me dwelt, I know not, in what region of the earth, in possession of what men?" The other Riddle (lxxxviii.) incidentally describes the forest life of the stag. "At whiles I climbed the steep hillsides, mounting to my dwelling. Then again I went into the deep dales to seek my food — my strengthening, strong in step. I dug through the stony pastures when they were hard with frost, then, as I shook myself and tossed my head, the rime, the gray frost, flew from my hair." Scott himself could scarcely say it better —

> But ere his fleet career he took
> The dewdrops from his flanks he shook.

It may be that when the English first came over, the reindeer was still to be found in the north of England; but this is mere conjecture, founded solely on the story, in the Orkneyinga Saga, which relates that the jarls of Orkney hunted the reindeer in the north of Caithness in the middle of the twelfth century. Once more, on this beast life in the literature of the woods, we are placed on the edges of the hills where the badger has his hole, and Cynewulf throws himself as fully into the life and passions of the animal for his home and children as he does into the eagerness of the hunter. The Badger speaks

> White of throat I am, fallow gray my head;
> Fallow are my flanks, and my feet are swift:
> Battle-weapons bear I! Bristles on my back,
> Like a sow's, stand up: from my cheeks two ears
> O'er mine eyes prick up. With my pointed toes
> Through the green grass step I! Great is then the grief
> Fated to me if a fighter,[1] fierce as death in battle,
> Findeth me concealèd where I keep the house, —
> With my bairns the building . . .
> . . . . When he comes, that deadly guest,
> (Digging) to my doors, death is doomed to them.
> . . . . . .
> So full stoutly must I, with my foreclaws working,
> Through the mountain steep make myself a street.
> By a hidden way, through the hole of the hillside

[1] The hunter whom he afterwards calls the Death-whelp. In this riddle I have left out several lines.

Lead my precious ones, my children. Then I shall no more
Fear in anywise war with the Death-whelp.

If the greedy battle-scather in the straitened way
Seeks me on my gang-slot; then he shall not miss
War-mote on the (mark)-path where the fighters meet.
When I rise at last, through the roofing of the hills,
And I furiously deal strokes with my darts of war
On the loathly foes whom I long had fled! Rid. xvi.

The darts of war are the badger's teeth, and Cynewulf paints him as a hero. It is in these short poems — in this sympathetic treatment of the beasts of the wood, as afterwards of the birds; in this transference to them of human passions and of the interest awakened by their suffering and pleasure — that the English poetry of animals begins. Of course, the temper of mind shown towards them here is connected with the beast-epics and beast-stories, and with the humanising of the beasts in the folk-tales, and in such short poems as the *Cock and Fox* of Chaucer and the fables of Henryson. But the difference between the beast-poems of this class and those of Cynewulf will be felt at once. In the one the beasts talk and act like men and women, in the other the poet feels from above with their life itself, — pitying or loving them. His sympathy is even more than that of Shakspere in his outside description of the horse or the hare. The note is rather the note of Burns and Coleridge, Cowper and Wordsworth, and is strangely modern in feeling.

Such is the forest and its indwellers in English literature. Along its outskirts lay the hamlets of those settlers who had pushed their way into it from either side of the river, or who had from the plains arrived at its edge. By slow degrees the circling scoop they cut into it grew larger, till at last enough land was cleared for all the kinsfolk and their slaves. If we wish to picture to ourselves the aspect of such a settlement, let us imagine a wandering singer coming through the untilled woodland to one of the villages, to sing his songs, and to pass on to another. He would blow his horn and shout as he walked to show that his aims were honest and peaceful, otherwise he might be slain as an outlaw and lie unavenged. And he would have to do this at the distance it may be of some miles from the village, for he might meet the slaves and the poor freemen of the village lords in the distant glades or on the uplands in the forest, tending the sheep, cows, oxen, and mares near the folds, lying out during the gloomy winter nights from Martinmas to Easter. Close by he might pass in some dark recess

the tree which served the village for the gallows — the wolf's-head tree — and startle the ravens at their feast. Nearer still he would meet in the more open glades, under the shade of the great beeches and oaks, the watchers of the swine, the huge herds that devoured the acorn and the mast, and the lean dogs that were with the watchmen; woodmen also, gathering wood for the fires, or cutting down the young trees to repair with them house and plough and hedge. Yet closer still, on the very skirts of the wood, where he began to see the light of the open space beyond, he might chance upon the remains of the sacred grove once dedicated to the dwelling and the worship of a god; or if the settlement were still heathen, as it might have been in Mercia under Penda, catch through the trees a glimpse of the rude temple — a hall within a wooden fence — and of a householder going up to do the worship of his house; or if the settlement were in some still earlier time, hear the song of the woman who kept the temple. But if it were a large hamlet, after Christianity had come, our wandering poet might hear the chanting of the priest in the church; or if a small forest village, such as we have chosen here to describe, he would see no church, but the cross set up beside one of the trees of the forest, chosen of old for its great size and splendour, and still retaining, it might be, the carved figures of birds or beasts, or even runes such as would tell him that in his father's days the gods of heathendom were worshipped beneath its shade. After the Danish occupation, such a wandering singer would most frequently find these dedicated trees. We have traces of such names in the charters. Kemble translates the *Wonac* and the *Wonstoc*, as Woden's oak and Woden's post; *Teowesporn, Frige daeges treow*, as Tiw's thorn, Frea's tree. Such a tree would also be the limiting tree, the mark-tree, and would tell him that all beyond it was village land.

Or he might, near at hand, set up also to define the edge of the clearing, see a cluster of rude, hoary stones, remnants of the old indwellers, past which at night the thrall or the poor freeman passed in fear of the spirits that haunted them. There too, and certainly if there were no river near, he might drink and rest, where, under the eaves of the mark (*gemearcodan aefsan* — "the branches that dripped their rain on the skirts of the clearing"),[1] the native spring or well which

[1] The *mark* was properly a sign, a line of division; hence a boundary line and also the belt of wild land round the cultivated area of a village: afterwards the march, or the width of neutral land between two communities. — Earle, *Land Charters*, p. 454.

served the township bubbled up, and which, lived in by a deity, was even yet worshipped. As he drank of its waters, he would see the whole clearing before him, the wide pasture lands, common to all, the undivided possession of fine grass, fed over by the horses, cows, goats, sheep, geese of the village; short, sweet sward, such as Cynewulf called the noble green floor of the earth; and beyond that, the arable land of the town, fenced into fields, and the fields divided into long furlong strips, subdivided into acres and half-acres — the allotments of the cultivators. The wide balks between were covered with grass or brake, and scattered over the whole were the men at work, dyking and delving, ploughing and clodding. Beyond that, and nearer to the town, was the home pasture where the folds of the lambs and calves and foals were set, and this ran up to the mound and the wattled fence on its top — which enclosed the "town" itself, and from which the "tun" derived its name, — the place which was tyned or girded with a fence of rods. At the other side from where he stood, the river, instead of the forest (in the village we conceive), formed the boundary of the occupied land. In it the "salmon roved and darted in the pools," and higher up, in the thick of the wood, the beaver built his dam across this stream. Then, our wandering singer (whom I will now call Cynewulf, because all the illustrations of village life which I shall quote are from his riddles), listening, heard the rushing of the water past the wattled weirs built out from its sides for the fishing, and saw the bridge of wood that crossed it, and perhaps mills by its side that ground the corn of the settlement, and thinking of the millstone made it the subject of his fifth riddle.

It might be, when he arrived, that the leading men had determined to take into the plough-land a portion of the common-pasture, and to extend the pasture in proportion by clearing more of the bounding wood; and then Cynewulf would see exactly what he described in his riddle of the Plough, where he calls the plougher (whom we see as if he stood before us) "the gray-haired enemy of the wood" (Rid. xxii.)

Netherward my neb is set, deep inclined I fare;
And along the ground I grub, going as he guideth me
Who the hoary foe of holt is, and the Head of me.
Forward bent he walks, he, the warden at my tail;
Through the meadows pushes me, moves me on and presses me,
Sows upon my spoor. I myself in haste am then.

. . . . . .

Green upon one side is my ganging on ;
Swart upon the other surely is my path.

It is a vivid picture of an old English farmer labouring on the skirts of the woodland, leaving behind him the furrow, black where the earth is upturned, green where the share has not yet cut the meadow. Then on the tilled land Cynewulf saw the gardeners wielding the rake, tending the vegetables which the little colony enjoyed, beans and onions and the rest, or dragging out the hurtful weeds from the pasture. "It is a thing" — riddles Cynewulf of the Rake — "that feedeth the cattle. Well does it plunder and bring home its plunder" — as if it were a forager. The riddle is dull, but it ends with the poet's pleasure in the meadows — "The Rake leaves firm the good plants" (Rid. xxxv.)

Still to stand fast in their stead in the field,
Brightly to blicker, to blow and to grow.

While he lingered, watching, he saw, perhaps on this very day, a common incident which he made into a riddle. Among the cattle on the pasture, the young bull was tethered. With his close sympathy with animals the poet paints him as rejoicing in his turbulent youth, and fed with the four fountains of his mother. Suddenly he saw the beast dash loose and rush from the pasture into the tilled land. Then Cynewulf let his imagination loose also, and pictured the bull breaking up the clods of earth left by the plough, as a monster might break up the hills.

Of the kind that is weaponed a creature I saw,
Of the gladness of youth was he greedy ; for a gift unto him
The Defender of Being let four welling fountains
Glittering, spring. . . . .
Then spoke a man, who said unto me —
"If the beast should escape, it will break up the hills,
If itself be up-broken, 'twill bind up the living."[1] Rid. xxxix.

Then all the clearing was full of birds. He had heard as he came along the pleasant noise of the vast multitudes of the wood-birds which were then in England, and the cries of the water-fowl in the forest pools and streams; but now in the open he would see them. He saw the eagle, the raven, and the hawk, floating in the open air above the clearing. They had come from their homes in the "Nesses of the woods" — the steep cliffs in the forest, or the rocky banks of

[1] That is, its hide will form leather strips for binding captives.

the stream — and Cynewulf would think of the last battle in which he had fought, and of these fierce followers of the slaughter. Among them, but not of them, he watched the falcon, the most noble of all birds to an Englishman, soaring to overtop the crane or the heron that built on the islands in the river.[1] And then, on the meadows near the stream where the fishers plied their craft from pool to pool, he saw the chief of the family of the township riding with the gray bird on his fist. And he remembered the riddle (lxxviii.) he had made, in which he had marked the aristocracy of the bird —

I an Ætheling's arm-companion am;
Am a wanderer with the warrior; well-belovèd of my lord,
Of a king the comrade. Oft a queenly woman —
One of golden locks — lays her hand on me,
Daughter of an Ætheling, if she be right noble.
On my breast I bear that which blossomed in the grove.
On a stately battle-steed sometimes I may ride
With the host, at head of it! Hardened is my tongue.
Often to a singing seer, when he hath sung well,
Do I give a word-reward.[2] Good is then my guise!
I myself am sallow-hued. Say what I am called!

The English lord, like the Norman knight, had in his household those who tamed the falcon; and in the poem on the *Fates of Men* there is a description of this which has some poetical feeling. To call the falcon a Welsh, a stranger bird (*falco peregrinus*), makes one imagine that the best kinds were brought from the northern cliffs, where the *Menologium* says that the "hawk in the sea-cliff lived wild,"

One shall the wild bird make tame on his wrist,
The proud-hearted hawk, till this prey-thirsty swallow
Gentle become; then girds he on varvels,[3]
And in fetters so feeds the feather-proud fowl,
With little morsels this Lift-speeder weakens,
That at last the Welsh bird, in weeds and in deeds
To its food-giver is friendly become.

But if the noble used the falcon, all the freemen, even of the poorer sort, made use of the ordinary hawk for hunting birds. The hawks were so numerous, long after the time of which we are speaking, that in a late Anglo-Saxon dialogue

[1] The falcon is never represented, like the eagle, as haunting the battlefield, as a devourer of the dead. In contrast to the eagle, who is the dark, the demoniac bird, it is brilliant and divine, the bird of heroes, nobles, and the happy gods.

[2] Reward, *i.e.* for song. I suppose the falcon is made a present to the singer.

[3] Silver rings round the foot.

we hear that they were let loose in the spring, and young ones freshly caught and tamed in the autumn. During the winter these winged servants pulled down the numberless water-fowl that nested in the river banks. One of the noblest of these, no prey indeed for the hawk, but the food of the eagle, was the swan; and once on a time Cynewulf, who may now have seen it flying over the forest to some inland pool or fen, described it in one of the finest of his riddles — marking especially that old tradition of its song, not before its death, but when it left the village to fly over the great world. Nor did it sing with its throat. Its *feathers* sounded melodiously as the wind went through them, a form of the myth which might easily arise among a people who knew of swan-maidens whose robe of feathers had a magical existence of its own and could be done off or on at pleasure. Cynewulf may have had, when he wrote this riddle (viii.), some form of the heathen myth in his head.

Voiceless is my robe when in villages I dwell,
When I fare the fields, or drive the flood along.
Whiles, my glorious garments and this lofty Lift
Heave me high above the housing place of heroes!
When the Craft of clouds carries me away
Far the folk above, then my fretted[1] feathers
Loudly-rustling sound, lulling hum along,
Sing a sunbright song, when stayed to earth no more,
Over flood and field I'm a spirit faring far.

That has the modern quality. Phrases, like "the strength of the clouds," "the spirit that fares over flood and field" (*flôde and foldan fêrende gaest*), the melodious rustling of the fretted feather-robe, the sense of a conscious life and personality in the bird and its pleasure in its own beauty, are all more like nineteenth century poetry in England than anything which follows Cynewulf for a thousand years. But it is not only the greater birds that are drawn with a vigorous pencil by the early English poets. Cynewulf, as he stood at the edge of the clearing, heard the Cuckoo shouting, and he sketched the bird in one of his riddles. But the sketch has no poetry in it; it is only when speaking of the Starling and the Nightingale that he feels the gentle influences of the singing fowl. He saw the Starlings,[2] as we suppose, upon this day, rising and

[1] *Fraetwe* is originally carved, fretted things; hence an ornament — anything costly; here, then, "my rich garment of feathers." *Craft* is, of course, power.

[2] Starling; at least so Prehn dissolves the Riddle. I am not sure he is right. The stare is not particularly a *little* bird, nor is its note sweet. Does it call its own name? The bird seems to answer best to the Martin; others say that *Gnats* is the solution, but this seems out of the question.

falling in flocks over the hills and cliffs, above the stream where the trees stood thick, and over the roofs of the village, and the verse tells how happy he was in their joyousness, their glossy colour, and their song (Riddle lviii.)

Here the Lift beareth wights that are little,
O'er the hill-summits ; and deep black are they,
Swart, sallow-coated ! Sweet is their song !
Flocking they fare on, shrilly they sing,
Roam the wood-nesses, and whiles, the burg-halls
Of the children of men. Let them call their own name !

And now the evening falls, and as the traveller enters the town a flood of song bursts from the woods, and the English "earls" stop to listen, or sit silent in the doorways, while the "ancient evening singer," as Cynewulf calls the nightingale, pours forth his song. The bird himself speaks, proud of his power over men, and the whole thought of the riddle is the same as Wordsworth's —

Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods.

Many varied voices voice I through my mouth.
Cunning are the notes I sing, and incessantly I change them.
Clear I cry and loud ; with the chant within my head ;
Holding to my tones, hiding not their sweetness.
I, the Evening-singer old, unto earls I bring
Bliss within the burgs, when I burst along
With a cadenced song. Silent in their dwellings
They are sitting, bending forwards.[1] Say what is my name.
Riddle ix.

Making this song our supposed Cynewulf passed through the gate in the hedge and entered the village. The main road was probably paved, and led straight to the hall of the kinsfolk set in the midst and surrounded by a piece of meadow-

[1] I quote here the whole of Ealdhelm's riddle *De Luscinia* in order to confound those who say that Cynewulf in his *Riddles* is a mere imitator of the Latin. In the Latin there is not a trace of imagination, of creation. In the English both are clear. In the one a scholar is at play, in the other a poet is making.

Vox mea diversis variatur pulcra figuris,
Raucisonis nunquam modulabor carmina rostris,
Spreta colore tamen, sed non sum spreta canendo.
Sic non cesso canens, fato terrente futuro:
Nam me bruma fugat, sed mox aestate redibo.

Almost every riddle, the subject of which Cynewulf took from Ealdhelm, Symphosius, or Eusebius, is as little really imitated as that. Even the Riddle *De Creatura*, the most closely followed of them all, is continually altered towards imaginative work.

land. Many narrow paths, on either side of the main-way, went to the separate houses of the freemen, each with its farm buildings, each surrounded by its own hedge, and within the hedge, its orchard, or vineyard; perhaps fig-trees, or mulberry from which the morat was made; and many bee-hives. These stood under the apple-trees, or leaning against the out-houses of the farmer's home; and in the garth Cynewulf watched with pleasure, and afterwards described, the draw-well and the water-bucket rising into the air, then the black-haired Welsh woman carrying on her shoulders the yoke from which the water-buckets hung, "two hardy bondsmen," as he calls them in his fanciful fashion, "fast fettered together," which she bears under the roof of the hall (liii.). He saw the women spinning at the doors (xxvi.), or feeding the dogs and hens (li.). He saw the cobbler lay by his tools (xiii.), and the smith cease to labour at the sword (xxi. 6) and the war-shirt, and the jeweller at the ornamenting of the horn and the cup, the collar and the bracelet; he saw the carpenter leave the half-finished house, and the hedger lay aside his bill, and he made verses on them all. The paths were full of the men returning from work, the swineherd and the woodward, and the hewers of wood from the forest, and the hunter with his spoil; the watchers of the cattle from the common pasture next to the wood, the plougher and sower and gardeners from the arable land, the tenders of the lambs and colts and calves from the meadows nearest to the town, the miller and the eel-fishers, the weir-wards and the fowlers from the river-side. The town was full. He moved with the crowd, and soon saw shining in the red light of evening the high, horned gables of the hall of the kin, standing in the midst of the central meadow, and near it the moot-mound, or the two or three huge trees left to mark the place of assembly when the town was planned. All the freemen we picture now, were there, perhaps in their armour, their long hair floating on their shoulders, hearing and judging causes, making their own laws, taking counsel for war or peace, commanding and forbidding. The chosen head of the kinsfolk, with his comrades and the chief freemen, stood on the top of the mound as the wandering singer came through the crowd. When the moot was over and the evening star shone (the star the English called the "star of the swains"), and the loud horn "called with its voice the warriors to the wine-feast," the hall was opened, the torches were lit, the smoke rose from the great fires in the midst. The men sat down to eat and drink, and as Cynewulf

took his place, one of the women had finished a great web at the loom and brought it to the head of the kin into the hall, and Cynewulf, seeing this, made a riddle about the loom, which, to please his hearers, he likened to a noble warrior making and enduring a hard fight. Now his fancy paints the bed of the loom smitten by the restless and wrathful beam, "the fighting warrior"; now he sympathises with that part on which the web is stretched, and which is pierced by spears — perhaps, too, he thinks of the dartings of the shuttle, — then we see at last the "leavings of the battle," the finished web, borne into the hall. This is the riddle, but it is very difficult to translate, and many are its renderings —

I was then within, where a thing I saw;
'Twas a wight that warred, wounded by a beam,
By a wood that worked about: and of battle-wounds it took
Gashes great and deep! Very grievous were
To this wight the darts; and the wood with war-gear
Fast was bound about. Of its feet
One was fastened down, but the other active toiled,
Leaping through the lift, then the land anear!
And a tree was touching it, where it towered in light,
All behung with leaves. Then I saw the leavings
Of the Doing of the darts to the dwelling borne
Where men met a-drinking; where my master is.

Riddle lvii.

When Cynewulf had sung this riddle (if I may continue my presentation of him as a wandering singer), he would be offered mead and ale, borne to him from the small table at the end of the hall where the drink was placed. Inspired with the draught, we may well fancy him making two other riddles to make gay the feast. The first, on the *mead*, begins with the bees bringing honey from the hills and dells, and then draws a vivid picture of the drunkard.

Far and wide I'm found, and of worth to men;
Carried from the copses, from the city's heights,
From the dells and from the downs. Feathers daily bore me
All along the air. Artfully they bore me on,
Under Heaven's high roof. Then the heroes (took me)
In a butt they bathed me! Now I am a binder,[1]
And a scourger then: soon I'm an o'erthrower!
Oft an ancient churl on the earth I fling,
And he finds at once if he fight with me,

[1] In a riddle concerning the Ox hide, it is said, speaking of its use as a leathern jug — a "black jack" — "I give the heroes drink from my bosom, I bind the swart Welshman and many a worthier man," *i.e.* the liquor binds them into slavery.

That with back (and shoulders) he must seek the ground !
If from that unrede he escape him not,
He's bestolen of his strength, in his speech is strong,
Of his mood not master, of his might bereft,
Powerless in feet and hands. Find out what I'm called.
I who thus to earth bind the hireling down,
Dullard by my dinting, even in the day ! Riddle xxviii.

The solution of the next riddle (xxix.) is, according to Prehn, a wine vat. The better answer has occurred to many. It celebrates "Old John Barleycorn." The things said, even to the very order of their saying, are so curiously like those said in the old ballad, that I am induced to conjecture that this impersonation is extremely old, and that Cynewulf's riddle and the ballad are both forms of a much older original. I translate the riddle, and a vigorous thing it is; and I give below[1] the version which Burns made of the ballad —

There's a portion of the earth, prankt most gloriously
With the very hardest and the very sharpest

[1] JOHN BARLEYCORN.

There were three kings into the east,
Three kings both great and high,
And they hae swore a solemn oath
John Barleycorn should die.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head,
And they hae swore a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.

But the cheerfu' Spring came kindly on
And show'rs began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surpris'd them all.

The sultry suns of Summer came,
And he grew thick and strong,
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
That no one should him wrong.

The sober Autumn enter'd mild,
When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
To show their deadly rage.

They've ta'en a weapon, long and sharp,
And cut him by the knee;
Then tied him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,
And cudgell'd him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

They filled up a darksome pit
With water to the brim,
They heaved in John Barleycorn,
There let him sink or swim.

They laid him out upon the floor,
To work him farther woe,
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
They toss'd him to and fro.

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,
The marrow of his bones;
But a miller us'd him worst of all,
For he crush'd him between two stones.

And they hae ta'en his very heart's blood,
And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise,
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his woe;
'Twill heighten all his joy;
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland!

And the very grimmest of the goods of men!
Cut and rubbed about, rolled around and dried,
Bound and twisted, bleached and softened,
High-adorned, bedecked, dragged along from far
To the doors of men! Dear delight is in it
For each living creature. It increases jollity[1]
In the aged who, living long, have of old enjoyed
Each the bliss he wished for — and abuse it not.
Then it, after dying, to declaim begins,
Things to tell in many ways! Mickle food for thinking
To a wise man is, what this wight may be![2]

Riddle xxix.

Many things took place as the feast wore on. We know its general customs from *Beowulf*. But we hear other matters from the *Riddles*. Sometimes a messenger came in, bringing tidings. Sometimes the lord called for his ancient sword and displayed its hilt and sheath and told of its great deeds. Sometimes he drew an old-time cup out of his treasures. "Often shall I," cries such a cup, "serve with joy in the joyous hall, when, glittering with gold, I am borne into the house where heroes are drinking." Sometimes bitter quarrels rose, men mocked and stabbed as in the Icelandic tales. Sometimes the boaster broke out into tales of his own, while the women poured out the ale. When the eating was over, the warriors, sitting blithely in the beer-hall, played at games or at throwing the dice, and so excited did they become that they forgot all the pain and sorrow of life. "They twain," say the *Gnomic Verses*, "shall sit o'er the dice while their misery glideth away

[1] *Clengeð* is here taken as a substantive.

[2] I have already mentioned the drinking habits of our early ancestors, and mocked at the accusation of a special barbarism levelled against them on this account — as if they were not in the eighth century the most cultivated people in Europe. In all Anglo-Saxon poetry, in these *Riddles* written by a wandering Bohemian, there is a tone of contempt for the drunkard. He is a captive, a degraded freeman; and the delight and inspiration which Cynewulf places in "jolly good ale and old" only makes his reproof of excess seem the stronger. It is the same in other Anglo-Saxon poetry. The most vigorous description of drunkenness is in the *Judith*. But it is the Pagan Holofernes and his thegns who drink themselves into the brutality which the poet scorns. There is another passage in the *Fates of Men* which sketches the view the ordinary Englishman (for I do not believe a monk wrote it) took of heavy drinking.

From another on the mead-bench shall the edge of sword
Take his life away! With the ale made wrathful,
With the wine besotten, far too hasty was his word!
Another at the beer, through the beer-out-pourer's hand,
Is a man mead-mad. Then he may not mete
Any measure to his mouth, by his mind's (discreetness).
But his life shall lose in a loathly fashion;
From delight disparted, suffer dreadful ill!
And the men in talking of the mead-enmaddened's drinking
With their mouth shall say — "Murderer of himself."

Fates of Men, ll. 48–57.

from them. They forget their sad fate. They have their pleasure on the board." Often enough, when the drinking was hard, as it was likely to be after a battle, but not in the peaceful assembly of everyday life, the evening ended tumultuously. There is a vigorous description of such a feast in a poem ("*Bî manna môde,*" ll. 13–20), where a contest arises among the warriors as to who stood firmest in the battle. "Many a one," it says, "is full of talking and praises; prideful war-smiths who in their wine-burgs sit at the feast and tell sooth stories, to and fro barter their words, and set their mind to know who of the warriors, on the spear-stead, holds out the best. Then the wine whets the breast-thoughts of fighters, and midst of the throng wild shouting arises, a varied tumultuous outcry." But chiefly it was playing and song which lightened the evening. Cynewulf, who we suppose was in our imagined hall this night, may have heard other instruments than the harp, for he has riddles on the reedflute which the lover plays for his mistress, and on the bagpipe and the psaltery. The bagpipe sits at the banquet, waiting till it can make known its skill. "Pleasant speech is in its foot and a sweet voice. Ornaments enrich its neck, and it is proud of its rings"; but the psaltery "sings through its side, and is haughty, and of a bright countenance, rejoicing in the use of men."

At last the feast is over, the men go to their homes, the "helm of night" covers the village, but the house is not yet still. Cynewulf hears the men and maid-servants chattering, and household work being done, before the fires, and sketches the master of the home seeking his treasure-press at midnight, either to lay by some new booty, or to look at the goods which he had of old won in battle. Then there was silence; but as the poet lay down to rest a new riddle came into his head. He had seen, before he had gone into the hall, the new moon with the old moon in her arms in the "broad Burg" of Heaven, above the clearing. And his imagination likened the moon to a young warrior returning with his spoil between his horns, who would build his hall in the very citadel of Heaven. But another and a greater warrior — the sun — was at hand, who, rising over the horizon's wall, would take the booty of the moon and drive him homewards with great wrath. Then the sun also would hasten westwards, and the night would come again with mist like dust and falling dew. So he made the 30th riddle.

It is characteristic of Cynewulf, who probably derived his first idea of this riddle from that of Eusebius on the same

subject, that he departs altogether from the way Eusebius treats the subject. In Eusebius, sun and moon are friendly. Here they are enemies, — their strife is renewed each night and day. Defeat and victory and pursuit are incessantly interchanged. The little poem is a true piece of imaginative and mythical Nature-poetry, and the end is as terse and rapid as it would be in the hands of Tennyson —

I have seen a wight wonderfully shapen,
Bearing up a booty, in between his horns,
A Lift-Vessel flashing light, and with loveliness[1] bedecked;
Bearing home this booty, (brought) from his war-marching!
He would in the burg build himself a bower,
Set it skilfully, if it so might be. —
Then there came a wondrous wight o'er the world-wall's roof —
Known to all he is of the earth's indwellers —
Snatched away his war-spoil, and his will against,
Homeward drove the wandering wretch! Thence he westward went,
With a vengeance faring, hastened further on!
Dust arose to Heaven, dew fell on the earth,
Onward went the night. And not one of men
Of the wandering of that wight ever wotted more.

Early in the morning he rose and went on his way. Now as he passed through the town it chanced that in one of the garths the household were gathered together and were troubled, for the hive was empty; the bees had swarmed, and they knew not where they were. Then Cynewulf, who knew the old songs and charms, leant over the hedge and said to them, "I will do this thing for you, take some earth and, throwing it with your right hand under your right foot, say —

"So I take it under foot — I would find (the swarm)! —
(*he sees the swarm*)
Lo! this earth be strong 'gainst all wights whatever,
And against all grudging, and against forgetfulness,
And against the mickle tongue of the (mighty) man."[2]

And then the folk saw the place where the bees hung, and Cynewulf cried to them, "And now throw gravel over the bees as they swarm, and say this verse of the old time which our kin sang of old" —

[1] Skilfully, *listum;* therefore "beautifully."
[2] All these *Charms* which I treat of now, and in the *Note* at the end of this volume, will be found in Cockayne's *Leechdoms*, and in Wülker's edition of the Anglo-Saxon poetry, under the title of *Zaubersprüche*. They are full of Folk-lore interest, but they are also well worthy of a place in English literature. They have a childlike ancientry which is delightful. They smell of the earth and the woodland and the village life. Now and then the natural imagination works finely in them, without consciousness of itself, as in the charm

Sit ye, Victory-women, sink ye to the earth!
Never to the wood fly ye wildly more!
May ye be as mindful of my good to me
As is every man of his meat and home.[1]

And the women smiled, and when they had sung the old lay, the bees swarmed. Then Cynewulf laughed with pleasure, and, as the folk thanked him, said, "Take veneria[2] and hang it to the hive, then the bees will not fly away, and if you wish to keep them safely, lay a plant of madder on the hive, so will no man be able to lure away the bees, nor can they be stolen the while the plant is on the hive."

So he walked on, thinking of the old days and the many strange charms which still prevailed in the land, though the Christian priests were hard on them; and now he had passed through the gate and saw a farmer who was giving a herd of cattle into the charge of one of his servants; and he was reciting a kind of spell to prevent them from being stolen from the forest pastures. Cynewulf stayed to listen, and this is what he heard. Part of it, chiefly the part in verse, was very old, but it had been Christianised.

"Neither stolen nor hidden be aught of what I own, any more than Herod might (steal or hide) our Lord. I thought on Saint Helena, and I thought on Christ hung on the rood; so I think to find these beeves again, not to have them wandering far, and to know (their fold), not to have them mischieved, or led astray, but tenderly cared for."[3] Then the farmer began to sing a spell, putting in the name of God into the old verse —

Garmund, of God the thegn,
Find the cattle and fare out the cattle,
And have the cattle and hold the cattle,
And bring back the beeves to their home.

against the shooting elves. No history of poetry can afford to neglect them any more than it can neglect the Ballad of which things of this kind were one of the origins.

[1] This is plainly a heathen charm. When it says, "Let this Earth be strong against all wights," it goes back to that most ancient time when Mother Earth was perhaps the sole goddess of Angle-worship — the strong and faithful protector of men, and of all their agricultural work. The "Sigewif," the Victory-women, Grimm mixed up in some way or other with the Valkyrie; but the phrase belongs, I think, to a world which did not know the Valkyrie, but did put a living spirit into beasts, birds, and into those insects which were bound up, like bees, with the daily life of men. "Sigewif" here seems to me to be a term of flattering endearment, such as we find in our nursery song, "Lady Bird, Lady Bird, fly away home."

[2] These are fragments of old Charms.

[3] This is not literal; but it is, I think, the meaning.

The rest has no value. It is a spell against a reaver of cattle, and ends — "Let him be all wary as wood is wary of the fire, as the thigh of bramble, or of thistle, who may think him to mislead or to drive away this cattle."

When he had heard this, Cynewulf went onwards, and now he had gotten among the acres, where, near at hand, he saw a little knot of men upon a piece of plough-land of a hungry look; and drawing near he heard them reciting the *spell for bewitched land*, to which he had listened when he was a boy, and which he was told had come with the Angle out of their fatherland beyond the sea. But now it was mingled up with Christian words and rites, and with Christian names, and it sounded very old and curious; and so old it was that the meaning of *Erce*, one of the heathen names, was even then unknown. They had just begun as he came up. The night before, ere the day-dawning, they had taken four turfs in four parts of the acre,[1] and dropped thrice into their place oil and honey and barm, and milk from each kind of cattle that fed on the land, and a piece of each kind of tree, except the hard trees (oak and beech), and a piece of every well-known wort except buck-bean; and scattered holy water on them, and had said these words, "Wax and grow, and fill this earth"; and they had taken the turfs then to church and let a mass priest sing four masses over them and turned the green side to the altar; and afterwards, before the down-going of the sun, had taken the turfs to where they were before. And they wrote on each end of four crosses, "Matthew and Mark, Luke and John," and laid the cross of Christ on the lower part of the pit and said, "Cross! Matthew," etc. etc. Then they took the turfs and set them down therein and said nine times as before "Wax and increase, and fill this earth," and the Paternoster as often, and then turned eastward, and louted down nine times humbly and said —

To the East I stand, for the gifts-of-use I bid me;
So I pray the mighty One, so I pray the mickle Lord,
So I pray the Holy One, Ward of Heaven's Kingdom.
Earth I also pray and the Heaven above
And the sacred sooth Maria,
And the might of Heaven and its high-built Hall,

[1] It is plain that we have here a heathen ceremony with Christian rites and names added to it. The turfs were taken to the shrine of the god, and the green side turned to his symbol, and runes written on bast, and a song, of which we have a portion in the verse, sung to Earth and Heaven. These are the old sacrificial rites of the ploughing, and there are many similar observances, some of which will be found in the chapter on Charms in Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*.

That I may this magic spell, by the favour of the Lord,
Open from my teeth through a thought firm-grasped;
Waken up the swelling crops *for our worldly need;*
Fill the fielded earth by my fast belief.
Prank the turfed plain with fairness, as the Prophet quoth —
That he had on earth his honour whoso had praiseworthily,
By the grace of God, given out his alms.[1]

And now they were met to fulfil the charm. And the owner of the land stood and turned himself round three sun-courses, and stretched himself out longways and said many litanies and Christian hymns and prayers; but the last song he sang was to Mother Earth, for himself and for all who were under him. Then he brought unknown seed which he had got from beggar-men, and for which he had given them twice as much as he had taken, and gathered all his plough-tackle together. And he bored a hole in the plough-beam and put into it (stor-) styrax, and fennel, and soap, and salt which had been hallowed, but the seed he set upon the body of the plough. Then Cynewulf listened to the ancient lay —

Erce, Erce, Erce — Mother of Earth! [or, O Earth, our Mother]
May the All-Wielder, Ever-Lord grant thee
Acres a-waxing, upwards a-growing,
Pregnant (with corn) and plenteous in strength;
Hosts of (grain) shafts[2] and of glittering plants
Of broad barley the blossoms,
And of white wheat ears waxing,
Of the whole earth the harvest!
Let be guarded the grain against all the ills
That are sown o'er the land by the sorcery-men,
Nor let cunning woman change it nor a crafty man.[3]

[1] This is the least heathen of all the poetic fragments in this charm; but I have italicised, in the translation, the verses which seem to have formed part of the ancient Earth and Heaven worship.

[2] A very long note on this will be found in Wülker.

[3] These last three lines have been shortened. *Cunning woman* might be better translated "talkative woman," and *crafty* is of course "powerful." This is nearly altogether a very old heathen invocation, used, I daresay, from century to century, and from far prehistoric times, by all the Teutonic farmers. Who *Erce* is remains obscure. But the *Mother of Earth* seems to be here meant, and she is a person who greatly kindles our curiosity. To touch her is like touching empty space, so far away is she. At any rate some godhead or other seems here set forth under her proper name. In the Northern Cosmogony, Night is the mother of Earth. But Erce cannot be Night. She is (if Erce be a proper name) bound up in this song with agriculture. Grimm suggests *Eorce*, connected with the Old High German *ërchan* = "simplex." He also makes a bold guess that she may be the same as a divine dame in Low Saxon districts called Herke or Harke, who dispenses earthly goods in abundance, and acts in the same way as Berhta and Holda — an earth-goddess then, the Lady of the plougher and sower and reaper. In the Mark she is called frau Harke. Montanus draws attention to the appearance of this Charm in a

And when he had thus sung he pushed on the plough and cut the first furrow; and then he stayed himself and, looking on the upturned earth, he sang again a very ancient verse —

Hale be thou, Earth, Mother of men!
In the lap of the god be thou a-growing!
Be filléd with fodder for fare-need of men!

Then the farmer took of each kind of meal and let knead a broad loaf with milk, and laid it under the first furrow and sang again —

Acre, full fed, bring forth fodder for men!
Blossoming brightly, blessed become!
And the God who wrought the ground grant us gift of growing,
That the corn, all the corn, may come into our need.

And when he had so sung, the work was done, and he drove the plough on through his acre. But Cynewulf walked on, nor was he fated to leave the place till he had heard something more heathen still. For now a little way in the wood he came to a hill whence the trees had been cleared, and he saw a man crouching doubled up upon the ground in sudden pain of a stitch caused by witchcraft; and another, who stood by, held a shining linden shield over him as if to guard him from weapons shot at him, and was anointing him with a salve made of fever-few and the red-nettle, which had grown through

convent at Corvei, in which this line begins "Eostar, Eostar, eordhan modor." Nothing seems to follow from this clerical error. The name remains mysterious, and I am glad of it. As to the rest of the song, it breathes the pleasure and worship of ancient tillers of the soil in the labours of the earth and in the goods the Mother gave. It has grown, it seems, out of the breast of Earth herself. Nor are the next four lines less remarkable and less heathen. Earth is here the mother of men. The surface of Earth is the lap of the goddess; in her womb let all growth be plentiful. Food is in her for the needs of men. "Hale be thou, Earth!" I daresay this hymn was sung, ten thousand years ago, by the early Aryans on the Baltic coasts. The next four lines — Acre full-fed — are partly heathen, partly Christian.

On the whole, we are placed in these songs in that early time, after settled agriculture had begun, when the "Cornfield," as Professor Rhys says, "is the chosen battlefield where the powers favourable to man make war on those other powers that would blast the fruits of his labour." And if we wish to bind up this ancient English Earth Religion with Northern names of gods, we may think of Frigg, Woden's wife, who is the Earth goddess, and of Thor her son, the god of husbandry, "the farmer's friend," whose bolt cleaves the storm-clouds that threaten the grain and disperses the blighting mists, who marries Sif, the yellow-haired goddess of the cornfield. Beyond this there is a literary quality in this old song, and in the Stitch-Charm that follows it, which, from its delightful naturalness, from its close clinging to the subject, and from its contrast to the conventional Christian poetry, pleases the ear and the imagination.

a fence,[1] and waybroad (*plantago*), which it was his habit, for he was a witch-doctor, to keep by him, having first boiled it in butter, that he might heal those whom the fierce elves shot with their spears. So Cynewulf drew near to listen, hiding in the fringe of the wood, and he heard the man singing this pagan song, which told of fierce witch-wives riding over the hill and flinging spears.[2]

Loud were they, lo, loud, as over the land they rode;
Fierce of heart were they, as over the hill they rode.
Shield thee now thyself; from this spite thou mayst escape thee!
Out little spear if herein thou be![3]
Underneath the linden stood he, underneath the shining shield,
While the mighty women mustered up their strength;
And the spears they sent screaming through the air!
Back again to them will I send another
Arrow forth a-flying from the front against them;
Out little spear if herein thou be!
Sat the smith thereat, smote a little seax out;
. . . . . .
Out little spear if herein thou be!
Six the smiths that sat there — making slaughter-spears:
Out little spear, in be not, spear!
If herein there hide flake of iron hard,
Of a witch the work, it shall melt away.
Wert thou shot into the skin, or shot into the flesh,
Wert thou shot into the blood, (or shot into the bone),
Wert thou shot into the limb — never more thy life be teased!
If it were the shot of Esa, or it were of elves the shot,
Or it were of hags the shot; help I bring to thee.
This to boot for Esa-shot, this to boot for elfin shot,
This to boot for shot of hags! Help I bring to thee.

[1] Through a sieve. The Romans had this custom. They laid a sieve in the road, and used the stalks of grass that grew through it for medical purposes. — Grimm, Chapter on Herbs.

[2] Elf-shooting, etc., is a common superstition in England. Indeed, it ranges from Shetland to Cornwall. Here is a Scandinavian instance: "That same autumn Hermund gathered a party and went on his way to Borg, intending to burn down the house with Egil in it. Now as they came out under Valfell, they heard the chime of a bowstring up in the fell, and at the moment Hermund felt ill, and a sharp pain under his arms, and the sickness gained on him."

[3] "In dock — out nettle. — Nettle in, dock out." — *Troilus and Cressida.*

In Sussex a poor woman is cured of a scald on a Sunday evening by an old wife who bows her head over the wound, crosses two of her fingers over it and breathes upon it, repeating these words —

There came two angels from the north,
One was Fire and one was Frost,
Out Fire, in Frost,
In the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Folk-Lore: Northern Counties (Henderson), p. 171.

Flee, witch, to the wild hilltop . . . .
But thou — be thou hale, and help thee the Lord ![1]

Then the strange chant ended, the witch-doctor bid the man take the seax and dip it into water; but Cynewulf had heard enough, and we bid him farewell as he entered the forest paths.

[1] I have taken Sweet's reading.

CHAPTER X

THE SEA

The English, at least in the north of England, were close observers not only of the natural aspect of the Earth, but also of the Sky and the Sea; and the proof of this lies in the number of words they invented to express the different appearances of these two great creatures. The changes of the Dawn from the first gray tinge of the heaven to the upward leap of the Sun; the changes of the Evening from the light left by the setting sun to the last glimmer of it before dead night, have each their own specialised words. The fiercer phases of natural phenomena were also watched and described with minuteness by the poets. Cynewulf dedicates eighty lines to the story, hour by hour, of the birth, the growth, and dying of the Tempest. But no natural object engaged them so much as the Sea, and for no object have they so many names. Their treatment of it in verse deserves a chapter in a history of English poetry. Such a chapter will bring together a number of descriptive passages, so varied in form and in imaginative sentiment that we shall be able to estimate the range of the natural description of the Angles, its limits and its excellence. No critical analysis of mine could make this estimate or give this insight into the way in which the English saw nature, half as well as the series of examples which I shall translate, and which describe the doings of the great Being who of all the living things of the world awakened in them the most profound emotion.

A shoal of simple terms express in *Beowulf* the earliest sea-thoughts of the English. But, still uncontent, the singers compounded these simple terms with other words, in order more fully to image forth the manifold impressions they had received of the doing of the great waters. Double, sometimes treble words were used to picture, if possible, the waves in storm and the ships that rushed through them. Many more than those in *Beowulf* were invented by Cynewulf, whose

imagination wrought like the surges he described; but at present our task is confined to the sea and the seamen as they appear in *Beowulf*.

The simplest term is *Sae*, our sea, and it has the general meaning which we attach to the word. To this they added *Waeter*, the great wet world beyond the land, which, when the adjectives *deep* and *wide* were prefixed to it, meant, it seems, the ocean. Then came *Flod*, our flood. This was the out-poured sea which flowed into and filled the hollows of the earth. The same word expressed anything that flowed — the tide, a river, the rush of an inundation. Correlative with this was *Stream*, which, when used of the Sea, probably meant the ocean river that went round the world, then the general flowing of the deep, and especially the apparent movement of the whole body of the sea in waves to the coast. Again, the term *Lagu* belonged to the Sea, as to all waters. The Sea was the great Pool, and considered as lying in a hollow; this word for it seems to express in poetry the sea at peace. There are certainly no words compounded with it in Anglo-Saxon poetry which suggest water in great disturbance.[1] *Mere*, another ancient term for the Sea, is of frequent occurrence, and means the desert waste of waters. Another word is *Holm*. As men stood on the beach or on the ship's prow they saw the wide waters raised up, as it were, around them, or lifted into a mound on the horizon, and this common aspect of the Sea they called *Holm*. It was the up-mounding of the Ocean; and Hunferth exactly expresses this when he says that the *Holm* bore Breca up on the strand. Hence it came to mean the high waves, each wave like a rounded height, and then the whole high going of the waves, and further the deep ocean itself, which was conceived as heaved upwards, like the coil of a great serpent, from the abyss below. This abysmal bottom of the deep was *Grund*, a word which, in connection with certain other words, is mixed up with a sense of dread, with that which was unfathomably unknown — the great cavernous bed of ocean, the hiding-place of primæval and deadly creatures, born of the slime, the grounded-dust that covered the foundation rock of the world. One giant line in *Lycidas* gives me this ancient impression —

> Visitest the bottom of the monstrous world.

[1] *Lagu-flod* and *lagu-stream* are, however, two components, and these may be instances of that use of *lagu* for flowing water on which Earle dwells in his notes to the Anglo-Saxon charters, though I do not understand how *lagu* can ever come to mean a flowing thing. Compounded with *flod* and *stream*, it means, I think, the flowing sea in its peace.

Another name for the Sea, *heaðu*, may also embody the conception of the high mass of water, the deep ocean, and then pass on to express the high tossing of the waves.

Sund used for the Sea is representative of another thought. We say a Sound of the Sea, but the earlier English who lived on the inlets and among the islands knew only the short stretches of sea which a man could swim across. Afterwards, when they knew the greater water, they transferred the name of the part to the whole. Perhaps they thought of it as the great swimming-place for their ships. *Brim* is another word, and if I may judge from *Brimi*, the serf-hall of the giants in Volospa, it is the Sea when it breaks in raging surf upon the margin of the shore, or the Sea breaking in foam on the deep. The Sanskrit word *bhram* ("to agitate") is compared with it; and in Dorsetshire I have found that the surf-borne sea sand is called Brim-sand. Generally then it means, I think, the rough sea furiously tumbling into foam, either far out on ocean or on the beach.

Garsecg, a frequent term in *Beowulf* and afterwards, is a very ancient name of the Ocean; the great encompassing sea that embraces the world. "Our forefathers," said Ælfred, translating and adding to Orosius, "divided into three parts all the globe of this mid-earth which the Ocean that we call Garsecg surrounds." Sweet says that it means the Rager[1] and this — the stormy-tempered giant of the Ocean — is close to the Northern thought. There are two words used for the sea in *Beowulf* which seem to belong to traditionary conceptions of the Ocean as the dwelling-place of a living Being. These are *Eagor*, compounded with *Stream*, and *Geofon*. Ægir, who in Norse mythology has by Ran, the net-wielding goddess who weaves destruction for sailors, nine daughters who are the waves, and whose song is the roaring of the surf, is, according to Grimm, an older god of the giant-kin, not one of the Æsir; and his name signifies the Terrible One. The word means, in Scandinavian poetry, the Sea itself; and the Anglo-Saxon term *Eagor* may be related to *ege* (awe), and *egesa* (horror). *Eagor-stream* might then possibly be translated the stream of Eagor, the awful terror-striking stormy sea in which the terrible giant dwelt, and through which he acted.[2]

[1] *Garsecg*, by transposition of *r* and *s* is the same as *gasric*, and *gas* = *gais*. Old Norse, *geisa*, to chafe, to rage (*Eng. Stud.* vol. ii. 315). This is indeed far better than deriving it from *gar*, a spear, and *secg*, a man, and connecting it with Poseidon and his trident!

[2] The English term *Eagre* still survives in provincial dialect for the tide-

Fifel is perhaps, Grimm thinks, another and obsolete name of Eagor. But *Fifel* seems to mean nothing more than a giant or monster, and it would be to push personification too far to make *Fifel* a personage because an Anglo-Saxon called the sea *fifel-stream* or *fifel-waeg*. There is more to be said of *Geofon*. The word does seem to gather personality round it in Anglo-Saxon poetry. It is used independently for the sea in *Beowulf*: "Geofon boiled with waves" (l. 515); as afterwards in the *Exodus* (l. 447): "Geofon threatened death." It may have some relation to the fierce sea of winter, and Geofon be the same as Gefion, the ocean-goddess whom we meet in the *Loka-Senna*, who, like Odinn, knows the fates of all men. At any rate we have in these names the conception of the Sea as an awe-producing, wrathful living thing. "Then Terror rose from the deep" is a frequent phrase used in describing storms at sea, as if a great giant pushed his head out of the billows. There is a half line in *Beowulf* which seems to speak of a fierce being who makes an onset on those who tempt the depth of the sea. When the hero is borne into the cave by Grendel's mother, it is said that the "sudden treacherous grip of the Flood can no longer reach him." When Caedmon describes the deluge he says: "The sea gripped fiercely on the fated folk," as if it were a giant that choked them.

These are the main names of the sea in *Beowulf*, and each of them describes some thought concerning it, or some one of its aspects.[2] They are more than words, they are pictures. A number of them are indifferently used together in one passage in *Beowulf*, with no distinction of meaning. They have become, it seems, mere poetic interchanges. It is too much the fate of words originally individual and noble. But the passage is sufficiently interesting to translate —

> Art thou that Beowulf who battled with Breca
> Swimming a match on the far spreading *sea*
> When in pride of your hearts ye proved the vast *fords*
> And on the *deep water* in a vaunting, like fools,
> Risked each your lives? . . . .
> . . . . There ye swam on the *Sund*,
> Arm after arm over *Eagor-stream* laid;

wave or bore on rivers. Dryden uses it in his *Threnod. August.* "But like an Eagre rode in triumph o'er the tide;" and Camden uses it when he speaks of the *bore* on the Severn. Yet we must be cautious in dwelling on any relation of these words to the Anglo-Saxon *Eagor*.

[2] I need scarcely mention the metaphorical names for the sea used in *Beowulf*. It is the *Hron-rad*, the *swan-rad*, the *segl-rad*, the *ganotes-baeð* — the "whale-road," the "swan-road," the "sail-road," the "gannet's-bath."

Measured the *mere-streets*, moved your hands to and fro,
Glode o'er the *Garsecg!* Tossed *Geofon* in waves,
A Welter of Winter. In *Water's* vast power
Seven nights ye strove. In swimming he beat thee,
More was his might! Him then at morn-tide,
Heaved up the *Holm* on the Heathoremes' land.

Beowulf, l. 506.

Compounded with these single terms are other words such as *faroð*, which itself sometimes means the sea, but is in composition the moving of the sea and is used now and then for the racing of the waves towards the coast. The chief of these secondary words is *wylm*, the upwelling, the tossing of the billows. Its most remarkable use in *Beowulf* is in conjunction with ice to express the tumbling of broken ice and sea together in a roaring welter; and in symbolism (so much had the tormented sea entered into Anglo-Saxon thought) it is compounded with care and sorrow. Lastly, the word *yð* (wave) is combined with others to image the various passions and actions of the sea in storm. We have *yð-geblond*, the confused blending of the waves; *yð-gewealc*, their tossing to and fro; *atol yða geswing*, their dreadful swinging; and *yð-gewin*, their tumultuous battling and onset like armies. Nor are more detailed descriptions of sea-scenery wanting in *Beowulf*. There is the hithe at the beginning of the poem and the ship waiting for the body of Scyld; the two voyages of Beowulf to Heorot and back again; the sea seen from the great cape where he is buried — the misty sea and the ships sailing in it. These I have already given. A few more remain which are worth quoting. The first describes in Beowulf's own words an adventure on the Northern Sea, night and fierce weather, and the peace of the morning on the waves —

When we swam on the Sound our sword was laid bare,
Hard-edged in our hands; and against the Hron-fishes [1]
We meant to defend us; nor might Breca from me
Far o'er the flood-waves at all float away,
Smarter on ocean; nor would I from him —.
There we two together, were (tossed) on the sea,
Five nights in all, till the flood apart drove us:
Swoln were the surges, of storms 'twas the coldest,
Dark grew the night, and northern the wind,
Rattling and roaring,[2] rough were the billows.
Then was the mood of the mere-fishes roused.

Beowulf, l. 539.

[1] Whales?

[2] *Heaðogrim and hwearf.* If we put *and* on to *hwearf* we must translate fierce blew in our faces," and so I have translated in a previous page.

There is also a light sketch of another kind of coast, not of cliffs, but of a wide flat of sandy shore, when Beowulf arrives at home. He "went with his following" —

> All along the sand, treading the sea-plain,
> Seabanks stretching far! Shone the candle of the world,
> Sloped the sun was from the south.[1]
>
> *Beowulf*, l. 1964.

One more description tells of the longing of an exiled seaman for his home, while he waited for summer, held from his sailing by the fierce winds of winter and the ice-fettered sea. Hengest was mindful of his land, though he could not drive o'er the sea his ring-equipped bark —

> Surged the sea in storms,
> Wrestled 'gainst the wind. Winter locked the waves
> In an icy bondage, till another year
> Came unto the garths . . . . .
> Weather glorious-bright. Then was winter gone,
> Lovely was the lap of Earth.
>
> *Beowulf*, l. 1131.

Such is the strong and stormy sea (*mere-strengo*, "strength of the sea," or "strength of the warriors on the sea," *Beowulf*, l. 533) which is heard breaking in the background all through the action of the poem of *Beowulf;* and those who first sung its verse were masters of the Ocean and its lovers. The sea was their patrimony, as it was the whale's. The young men went out on adventure from every settlement on the coast to fight and to plunder, and when they amused themselves with trading it was in reality the exchange of plunder for plunder. When they were not fighting they were hunting the sword-fish, the walrus, the seal, and the whale in the icy seas, or struggling for wagers to excel one another in the battle with the elements. The Ocean was itself a mighty monster with whom they fought for life; and in it, as we see, were orcs and tusked terrors and witches of the waves, and wolves of the deep, hideous half-human brutes like Grendel and his dam, shapeless fish-like things which attacked man, wrathful at their home being invaded; and memories of these superstitious creatures lasted on into the Christian poetry. But the sea-rovers of Beowulf's time cared for none of these things. They were true sea-dogs, the forerunners of the men who sailed in wasp-like ships from the southern harbours of England to the Spanish main. They were probably a separate class, not to

[1] That is, it was near mid-day.

be mingled up with the farmers, the thegns and the lord, who dwelt in burgs like Heorot or in the cultivated lands; but most of the young men of spirit seemed to have joined for a time at least the ships of the sea-harriers. Beowulf talks of his class as distinct from those to whom he spoke in Heorot: "We sailers of the sea," he says. Ongentheow retires to his fort "that he might be able there to withstand the seamen, and shield his hoard from the seafarers." It is a phrase which a Spanish Don might have used when he heard that the ships of that devil, Drake, were seen in the offing. They are called "travellers of the wave" and "dwellers of the deep." There is no trace in *Beowulf* of any dread of the sea, even in its worst moods, nor do the men complain of the labours of the ocean, or its icy weathers. They are rather comrades of its storms, and it is their glory to sing their daring while they overcome its anger. What Sidonius said of the pirate Saxons would have been true of Beowulf and his sea-crafty men: "They know the dangers of the ocean as men who are every day in touch with them. In the midst of tempests, and skirting the sea-beaten rocks, they risk their attack with joy, hoping to make profit out of the very storm." And this is all the plainer from the number of names given to the ship — names which speak their pride and their affection. It is the Ætheling's vessel, the Floater, the Wave-swimmer, the Ring-stemmed, the Keel, the Well-bound wood, the Sea-wood, the Sea-ganger, the Sea-broad ship, the Wide-bosomed, the Prow-curved, the Wood of the curved neck, the Foam-throated floater that flew like a bird.

This fearlessness, this friendship with the waves, this love of their vessel as of a mistress, passed away with their settlement in our England. Such, at least, seems the evidence of Anglo-Saxon poetry. The first arrivals on the coasts of Southern and Northern Britain were the roving pirates, the young sea-heroes and their bands. These went inland and became great land-warriors. Those who came after them and those who settled on the coasts, were probably the agricultural freemen and warriors of Engle, or Saxons from the inland who were unaccustomed to the sea. The South Saxons did not even know how to fish when Wilfrid came among them; and we know the difficulty that Ælfred had in working up a fleet (he was probably his own shipbuilder), and how ignorant of naval war Englishmen had become in his days. The temper in which the ordinary Northumbrian seaman looked upon the sea was not at all the sea-dog temper, but that of the common

merchant sailor who, while he sailed the waves, dreaded their dangers and complained of their hardships. There is not a trace of that audacious sense of lordship over the sea which the sea-rover possessed. The passage in the *Gnomic Verses*, though it seems to speak of a Friesland home, may well have arisen concerning one of the Frisian band which seems to have settled to the north of the Tweed, and at least the collector of these scattered verselets adapted it to the case of those for whom he edited the lines. It is plain that the true home of this man and his type is on shore and not on sea —

Dear the welcomed one
To the Frisian wife, when the Floater 's drawn on shore,
When his keel comes back, and her churl returns to home,
Her's, her own food-giver. And she prays him in,
Washes then his weedy coat, and new weeds puts on him,
O lythe[1] it is on land to him, whom his love constrains.

Fearlessness and peace are found on the land, but on the ocean terror and disquiet. The beginning of the *Seafarer* is full of this temper. The old man must tell, he says, of his voyages, how often he outlived hours of pain, bitter care in his breast, sailing in his ship through seas of sorrow, amid the frightful whirling of the waves, keeping the anxious night-watch on the prow, his feet pinched with the frost, his beard hung with icicles, hunger in the heart of him, sea-wearied, far from his beloved, hearing only the scream of the sea-mew and the high flood thunder on the cliffs. No man on land can think what woes he suffers who fares far forth upon the wanderings of the sea. Yet even in that poem, which I keep for separate treatment, the attraction also of the sea appears, the longing of the young sailor to go on voyage, the pull of the ocean life upon the heart. But for all that, nothing of the Viking spirit is found in it; mourning and fear, not joy and daring, fill its lines. Again in the *Andreas* the shipmaster tells Andrew that he who tries a sea-journey has a hard life, and the comrades of St. Andrew are terrified when the storm begins. It is only the overmastering duty of the thegn to his lord which prevents them from asking to be set on shore. The "Water Terror" which rises from the waves is made much more of in these later poems than it is in *Beowulf*. In the great riddle on the Hurricane there is a picture of a ship with its crew aghast for fear, almost unable to work in the horror of the tempest. The sailor in the *Gnomic Verses*, "who rows against the wind is weary." When the timid sailor is threatened of the captain,

[1] Pleasant, soft.

"he loses his courage, and his oar drieth on board." Everywhere it is the merchant sailor and not the sea-warrior who speaks. Nevertheless, in Cynewulf's poem of *Elene*, one of the last he wrote, another note is struck, a reversion to the old heroic strain concerning the sea; and the voyage of Helena is described as if it were a Viking expedition. I cannot do better than illustrate these remarks by passages from the *Andreas* and the *Elene*, and all the more because, in these passages, I think that the scenery of the Northumbrian coast is represented.

God appears in a vision to Andrew, and bids him set sail for Mermedonia to deliver Matthew from prison, and Andrew answers that God's angel would do the business better; for he knows the going of the seas and ocean's salt streams, and the swan-road, and the war of the waves on the shore, and the water-terror.

> But to me the war-ship's streets[1]
> O'er the water cold are not known at all. *And.* l. 200.

"Alas, Andrew," answers God, "that ever thou shouldest be slow to this journey!"

> Yet thou shalt assuredly, at the early dawn,
> Even at to-morrow, at the ocean's ending,
> Climb upon thy keel, and o'er water cold
> Break along the bathway. *And.* l. 220.

Andrew, now steadfast, sets forth with the rising of the day, and the description of his path to the sea has often recalled to me the approach to the seashore, over the dunes of sand near Bamborough —

> Then he went him at the dawning, at the earliest day,
> O'er the sandy hillocks, to the sea's inflowing,
> Daring in his thinking; and his thegns, beside him,
> Trampled o'er the shingle. Thundered loud the ocean,
> Beat the surges of the sea. *And.* l. 235.

When they come to the shore they see a boat drawn up, amid the breaking of the surf, and the shipmaster seated on the bulwark, and two sailors with him. They are Christ and two angels, and the dialogue, which I shall speak of afterwards, ends in the embarkation of Andrew and his comrades. The waves are high and whirling and the storm begins to rise.

[1] *Herestrata* would mean, on land, the military roads; hence the "main streets." Andrew means that he did not know what every seaman knew, the well-known routes across the sea.

In short, vigorous lines the poet describes it, and the terror of Andrew's companions —

Then was sorely troubled,
Sorely wrought the whale-mere. Wallowed there the Horn-fish,
Glode the great deep through; and the gray-backed gull
Slaughter-greedy wheeled. Dark the storm-sun grew,
Waxed the winds up, grinded waves;
Stirred the surges, groaned the cordage,
Wet with breaking sea. Water-horror rose
With the might of troops.[1] Then the thegns
Cold with terror grew, nor thought any one
That alive he should win at last the land. *And.* l. 369.

A fine passage follows in which the thegns of Andrew refuse to leave him, and the steersman bids him break the length of the journey by telling how Christ acted in the gale that so the young men may be comforted. "Long is our journey still over the fallow flood, very far the land we seek," and now "the sand is upblended, the ocean bed with the shingle," a phrase which puts us in mind of the lines in the first book of the *Æneid.*[2] Whereat Andrew strengthens them with words. "The Water Terror shall become gentle, as of old it was with us upon the Lake of Galilee;" and he tells the story of Christ's calming of the sea. Cynewulf paints it from nature, and the sea he describes is not that of Gennesaret, but of the German Ocean —

So of yore it fell that on sea-boat we,
O'er the war of waves, ventured (ocean's) fords,
Riding on the flood. Perilous and dread
Seemed the sea paths then. Eagor's streamings now
Beat upon the bulwarks;[3] billow answered billow,
Wave replied to wave! And at whiles uprose,
From the bosom of the foam to the bosom of the boat,
Terror o'er the Wave-ship. *Andreas,* l. 438.

Meanwhile the Almighty slept in his brightness on "the Rusher through the sea," but when the fearful called, arose and stilled the weltering waters —

He rebuked the winds;
Sank the sea to rest. Strength of ocean-streams

[1] *Þreata þryðum* ("with the strength of armies"). This seems an impersonation almost too fine for so early a time. It is quite in the manner of the modern imagination. It is Kemble's translation, and Grein's is more probable, though I do not like to surrender the other — *Mächtig durch die Massen.*

[2] "His unda dehiscens
Terram inter fluctus aperit; furit aestus arenis." — *Æn.* i. 106, 107.

[3] *Bord-staeðu* means, I think, the bulwarks of the ship. Compare here "Deep calleth unto deep, because of the noise of the water floods," etc.

Soon did smooth become ! Then our spirit laughed
Whenso we had seen, underneath the skiey path,
All the winds and waves and the Water-Fear
Full of fear become for the fear of God the Lord.
Andreas, l. 451.

Therefore, he says (almost quoting a passage from *Beowulf*, save that God is substituted for Wyrd), "the living God will never forlet a man if his courage avail." And when they heard this tale, Andrew's comrades fell asleep, and "the sea grew calm, the rush of the waves, the rough rage of the deep returned," like a giant who had been roused from the depths, "whence it had come."

Now Andrew and the steersman, whom he does not know to be Christ, are alone left awake. "I would," says Andrew, who is amazed at the skill of this divine sailor, "thou wouldest teach me how thou guidest the swimming of this wave-floater, foamed over by the ocean, of this stallion of the sea." Then, either because the poet wishes to give local colour and invents voyages for Andrew, or, as I would fain believe, introduces his own personal experience of the deep and imputes it to Andrew, he tells how he has been sixteen times at sea, and contrasts these old journeys with his present one —

'Twas of old and now fate of mine to be
In a ship at sea, for sixteen of times ;
Frozen were my hands which the floods were moving,
Ocean's streaming tides !

Never have I seen any hero like to thee
Steer so o'er the stern ! Roars the swirling sea ;
Foaming Ocean beats our stead ; full of speed this boat is ;
Fares along foam-throated, flieth on the wave,
Likest to a bird.

Almost like it is, as if in a landlocked bay [1]
Still it stood at rest ; where the storm may move it not,
Nor yet wind at all, nor the water-floods
Break its beamy prow — yet o'er breaking seas it rushes,
Snell beneath its sail. *Andreas*, l. 489.

"Answer me, thou hast the answer of a sea-playing earl." And the steersman replies with a touch of the old Viking spirit, but also with the more modern fear of the sea —

Oft it doth befall, that on ocean's pathways we,
In our ships with seamen, when the squall comes up,

[1] *Landsceap* cannot mean our *landscape ;* but some place where ships were drawn to shore ; some land-edge, or as I have put it above.

Scour the bathway o'er with our stallions of the foam.
But at whiles on waves wretched is our fate
On the (weary) sea; though we win the voyage through,
Comrades courageful. *And.* l. 511.

But the flood tossing cannot let us against the will of the Lord who bindeth the brown waves, and now because thou art a messenger of God, terror has been stilled for thee; the wide-bosomed wave and all the fords have sunk to rest.

In all this passage concerning the sea, we do not catch, as I said, the note of *Beowulf*. The spirit of the merchant sailor and not of the warrior is shown in its verse. We hear a different note in a later poem, in the description of the expedition of the Empress Helena to find the True Cross —

Quickly then began all the crowd of earls
For the sea to ready. Then the stallions of the flood
Stood alert for going on the ocean-strand,
Hawsered steeds of sea in the Sund at anchor.
. . . . . .
Many a warrior proud, there at Wendelsea,
Stood upon the shore. Over the sea marges
Hourly urged they on, one troop after other.
And they stored up there — with the sarks of battle,
With the shields and spears, with mail-shirted fighters,
With the warriors and the women — the wave-riding horses.
Then they let o'er Fifel's wave foaming stride along
Steep-stemmed[1] rushers of the sea. Oft withstood the bulwark,
O'er the surging of the waters, swinging strokes of waves;
Humming[2] hurried on the sea! Never heard I ere or since,
Or of old, that any lady led a fairer power
O'er the street of sea, on the stream of ocean!
There a man might see (who should mark the fleet[3]
Break along the bathway) — rush the Billows'-wood along,
Play the Horse of flood, plunge the Floater of the wave,
'Neath the swelling sails. Blithe the sea-dogs were,
Courage in their heart. Glad the Queen was of her journey,
When at last to hithe, o'er the lake fast-rooted,
They had sailed their ships, set with rings on prow,

[1] I take this to mean the steep sides, or the up-curved and lofty prow of the ships. It curved back from the sea-level, steep as a hillside. The Anglo-Saxon *brant* or *bront*, and the Swedish *brant* are to be found in Northern England (*brant* and *brent*) to signify the steep (side of a hill). The Icelandic is *brattr* (steep). *Brandr*, a fire-brand, or the blade of a sword, also means the raised prow, the beak of a ship, and may be connected with the adjective *brattr*. — *Icelandic Dict.*, G. Vigfusson. *Wendelsea* is the Mediterranean.

[2] *Sae swinsade* —

The humming water shall o'erwhelm thy corse
Lying 'mid simple shells.

[3] Literally, the voyage, the path; hence, as I think, the voyaging fleet, the whole expedition.

To the land of Greece. Then they let the keels
Stand the sea-marge by, driven on the sandy shore,
Ancient houses of the wave. *Elene*, l. 225.

In these two sets of passages from the *Andreas* and the *Elene*, we hear the double note of which I have spoken. The last is, I suppose, the work of the imagination only; it is not likely that the poet ever joined a war-fleet; the first is imagination backed up by personal experience. But a man who loved the sea wrote them both. And this love, in which Caedmon, to a certain slight extent, seems to have shared, is confirmed by the new terms which Cynewulf invented or used for the sea, and by the new compounds he and his school added to those we find in *Beowulf*. Some of these are full of that poetry which grows up into expression when generation after generation live in constant vision of a vast natural power like the Sea. *Sund-helm* is used for the Ocean, the great covering helmet of the earth. *Arwela* is another name for the Sea, and its meaning — "the realm of the oar" — has come down to modern English poetry. *Hop* is the ocean seen, perhaps, as the vast Ring or hoop which embraces the world.[1] Then the adjective sea-still (*mere-smylte*) is used in comparison. A thing is said to be as quiet as the broad calm of the sea. Sea-bright (*mere-torht*), the burning sheen of the sunlit sea, is also used. A very cold thing is sea-cold (*brim-ceald*). A vast expanse or a broad-beamed thing like a ship is called *sae-geap* (sea-broad). *Holmeg* means, perhaps, stormy as the sea. Then as we had in *Beowulf*, *mere-strengo* (the strength of the sea), so now we hear of the might of the sea (*holm-maegen*) or, as it may be translated, the vast fulness of the deep; and with a similar meaning, *Lagu-faesten* the fastness of the deep, the fortressed sea, or the firm-set sea.

With the exception of *sea-calm* and *sea-bright* used as adjectives, there is no record of any fair and beautiful impression. The sea is always the dark and troubled waters of the German Ocean. It is never warm; a common phrase for it is the ice-cold sea. Its colour is never blue or green. It is always wan, black, or murky. The waves are brown or flood-gray. It is a flint-gray flood which in the gale hurls itself upon the cliffs (Riddle iv.). This gray colour of waters when they foam in flood dwelt in the eyes of the English.

[1] I fear, however, that this is quite unauthorised. See Grein's Dict. "Hôp." New metaphorical words are now used for the sea. It is called *hwales-eðel* (the patrimony of the whale), *fisces baeð* (the fish's bath), *seolh-wadu* (the seals'-path).

They settle on it as the hue of mountain streams in spate. "Water," the *Gnomic Verses* say, "shall rush gray in flood from the hills." In the same *Verses*, and in the *Wanderer*, the waves are fallow, dun-yellow, like withered ghosts of leaves, the frequent colour of the sea after storm as seen from the Northumbrian coasts. Indeed, as in *Beowulf*, what most the English felt was the impression of the wild turmoil of the billows, and they added words for this to those already used. *Hop-gehnaest* expresses the crashing of the spreading waves on the cliffs; *waroð-faruð* the surge as it breaks on the shelving beach; *waroða geweorp* is the dashing of the waves themselves upon the shore; *holm-þracu* the tossing and beating together of the tormented sea far from shore. *Sund-gebland* and *earh-gebland* are other forms of the same thought — the blending of wave with wave in the gale, — and *stream-gewin*, the warring of the waves with each other, is another word for this terrible surging.

Then there are a few more words compounded with *yð* a wave; *yða geþring* is the crushing together of the billows; *yða geþraec* the thronging of the waves; *yða-ongin* the onset of the waves on the shore, or on a ship. It may be also that *sae-beorg* signifies the whole mountainous advance of the billows of the sea, or any one mountain of water. The same image, with a different word (*dûn ofer dŷpe*), is used in the *Riddle* of the hurricane.

The whole mass of the onward rushing waves — as in the deluge — is called the host of Eagor. "I shall never lead again," answers God to Noah, "Ocean's army (*Egor-here*) over the wide land" (*Gen.* l. 1537). For the whole expanse of the sea, the word *Lagu-faeðm* is used, the embrace of ocean, the bosom of the deep; and out of it rises *waeter-stefn*, the voice of waters. Then there are new words in which the old mythological conceptions are contained — *waeg-þrea*, terror on or of the sea; *waeter-broga*, *waeter-egesa*, the water-horror, which rises from the depths when storm is on the surface. Through this went the ships, and a new name for them is *waeter-þisa* the rusher through the water. So also they are called *sae-hengest*, *sae-mearh*, sea-stallion, sea-horse; *sae-flota*, *sae-genga*, *sae-wudu*, sea-floater, sea-goer, sea-wood. *Brante ceole, hea hornscipe*, "with the steep-sided keel, the high-horned ship," describes the ships as they plunge through the deep, dipping their lofty figure-head in the waves. *Geofon-hus* and *mere-hus*, ocean and sea house, are other words for them, and are used of the ark in Caedmon. A passage in the *Guthlac*

brings a number of these ship names together. It is the description of the voyage of Guthlac's disciple to tell his sister of her brother's death. He climbs on board the boat, and then —

> Urged the *Stallion of the wave*, and the *Water-rusher* ran
> Snell beneath the sorrow-laden. Shone the blazing sky,
> Blickering o'er the Burg-halls. Fled the *Billow-wood* along
> Gay and gleaming on the path! Laden, to the hithe,
> Flew at speed the *Flood-horse*, till the *Floater of the tide*,
> After the Sea-playing, surged upon the sea-land,
> Ground against the shingle-grit. *Guth.* l. 1303.

"Whence come ye," says one in the *Andreas*, "solitary floaters on the wave, on your Sea-rusher?" And another passage uses this imaginative phrase: "The high-stemmed boat, the snell sea-horse, *woven round with speed*, bore us hither with the flood over the road of the whale."

There are other new words for all these matters, but let these suffice, while we turn to the direct things said concerning the sea in the later English poetry. Caedmon — I use the word for the poems under his name — has nothing like the range of treatment of the sea which is so characteristic of Cynewulf. His allusions to the great Element, in those parts of the poem which may have been really composed by him, are very much those which a quiet monk who saw the gray northern sea from the heights of Whitby in calm and in storm, would be likely to make out of an impression weighty from its continuance. It is only when he describes the Flood that we find the sea in presence, for the description of the vast water of Chaos may be drawn from ancient sources. That vast water is called *Garsecg*. "Garsecg o'er covered, swart in the endless night, far and wide the gloomy waves." In the tale of the deluge he speaks of the smiting and pushing of the black sea streams, of their warring or mounting on the shores, of the dusky waves, of the thunder noise of the whole deluging deep, of the Water-Terror that dared not lay his hand upon the Ark, of the hosted waves of Ocean, of the ebbing, of the foaming Wave-stream, until we seem to be standing with him in a north-east gale upon the cliff of Whitby. One other touch in the poem, perhaps from Caedmon's hand, is where God speaks to Abraham and tells him that his sced shall be like the stars for multitude. Caedmon makes these stars shine on the wide calm bosom of the deep, as, when peace was on that stormy northern sea, he may have watched them on a summer night from the edge of the lofty headland where his monastery stood —

On the Heaven gaze, count its glorious gems,
Count the stars of Æther, that, in space, so pure,[1]
Ever-glorious fairness, now so far are dealing!
O'er the billows broad, see, they brightly glimmer.
Genesis, l. 2189.

These are from the *Genesis*. In the *Exodus*, a poem which seems to have none of Caedmon's work in it, there is of course a great deal about the sea, but it is the sea treated miraculously. The phenomena described have no relation to reality, and, indeed, I seem to detect in it that the writer had not much personal acquaintance with the ocean. It is quite another matter when we look into the *Andreas*, the *Guthlac*, and the *Elene*, and into such poems as the *Seafarer* and *Wanderer*. These were written by poets in Northumbria who were well acquainted with the Deep. We have already told, in the lines from the *Andreas*, what the writer saw upon the mid sea as the ship ran over the surges, and the personal touch in it is as unmistakable as its vigour; but it has often occurred to me, though I only give it as a vague conjecture, that the passage which describes the awaking of Andrew on the land near the coast and the first sight of the town, may be also a record of a personal experience. It is just the sight a sailor, coming towards land in the morning, near Bamborough for instance, would have seen from the sea, — the plain, the city gates, the steep rock, the glittering tiles, the wind-swept walls. Andrew lies sleeping on the highway —

Until, now, the Lord let the lamp of day
Sheerly bright to shine, and the shadows sank away,
Wan below the welkin. Then there came the Weather-torch,
And the light of Heaven serene o'er the houses blickered!
Then awoke the war-hard man, looked upon the wide-spread plain,
Lying 'fore the Town gates. Towered there the steep hills
With high-hanging cliffs.[2] O'er the hoary rock
Stood the gay-tiled houses, stood the towers up,
And the wind-swept walls. *And.* l. 835.

It may have been also in one of these conjectured voyages that it occurred to Cynewulf to imitate, but with many a change, the riddle of Symphosius on the Ship. This is "a work of skill that grinds into the gravel and yelling fares along; which has neither face nor hands, shoulders nor arms, but moves on a single foot (its keel) over the fields of ocean and has many ribs and a mouth in its midst." Nor is this a war-ship as a Norseman would have described, but a merchant-

[1] "Spaciously gentle," perhaps.
[2] I have punctuated these two lines in a new fashion.

man. It brings "food and gifts that rich and poor desire, every year, to men." When it enters the bay, the anchor is let go; and the vigour and fire with which Cynewulf makes another riddle on the Anchor has all the spirit of a sailor in it. The Anchor is a strong and warring hero, following in this Symphosius from whom the idea of the riddle is taken. But Cynewulf's Anchor-hero is more feelingly impersonated than that of Symphosius. A touch of sorrow, as Prehn thinks, of a sad weird laid upon him, belongs to a phrase like this which tells how the Anchor felt in the solitude of the ocean-bed — "Strange is that home to me." Here are the first lines (Rid. xvii.) —

Oft shall I with waves be warring, and with winds be fighting.
And against sea-tangle[1] — whensoe'er I plunge to seek
Earth with surges over-shrouded. Strange such homeland is to me!

These are the doings on the Sea, but there are also a number of passages which might have been written by a settler on the coast who looked on the Sea from the shore. One, the description of Andrew passing over the sand-dunes to the beach, has already been quoted. There is another in the *Wanderer* (l. 46), where the lonely man wakens from his dream of joy and beholds the image of his own sorrow in the wintry waters —

And he sees before him [heave] the fallow waves,
And the sea-birds bathing, broadening out their feathers,
And the hoar sleet hurtle down, snow with hail commingled.
. . . . . Care is then renewed
For the man who many times must with passion send
All his spirit sorrow-laden o'er the sea-floods interchaining.[2]

The birds of the sea, as in this passage, are not neglected. The tern, the "sea-swallow icy feathered," the "sea-eagle, dewy feathered and barking among the cliffs," the "swan as it sang its song" in flight over the waves, and the gannet and the sea-mew shrieking in the storm, are all brought together in the *Seafarer*. In the *Andreas* there is a vision of sea-eagles —

[1] Or "I contend against both of them."
[2] "O'er the binding of waters."

When the midnight moon is weaving
Her bright chain o'er the deep.

Byron means that the moonlight on the faintly-rippled sea makes, as it were, a silver coat of mail — chain-mail — over the deep. But the poet of the *Wanderer* means, I think, the interlocking of the waves, their knitting together into a net which weaves together all the waves of all the oceans. That it should mean, as some think, the bond of the ice sheet over the sea, does not accord with the context.

Us sea-weary sleep o'erwent;
Then on came earns, o'er tossing waves,
Fast in flight, in wings exulting. *And.* l. 862.

The 11th riddle of Cynewulf describes, as I believe, the Barnacle goose, and only a man who was well acquainted with the sea and its dwellers could have done the thing as well. It is so interesting, even from an historical point of view — since it puts back old Gerarde's tradition so far — that I give it entire[1] —

In a narrow was my neb, and beneath the wave I lived;
Underflowen by the flood; in the mountain-billows
Low was I besunken; in the sea I waxed
Over-covered with the waves, clinging with my body
To a wandering wood ——.
Quick the life I had, when I from the clasping came
Of the billows, of the beam-wood, in my black array;
White in part were then my prankéd garments fair,
When the Lift upheaved me, me a living creature,
Wind from wave upblowing; and as wide as far
Bore me o'er the bath of seals — Say, what is my name!

[1] The answer Prehn gives to this riddle is *See-furche*, and he connects it with the 13th Riddle of Symphosius, and with Ealdhelm's, iv. 11. The reasons he gives for this answer are not sufficient to induce me to give up my own answer, which seems to fit at every point. One would scarcely talk of the neb of a *sea-furrow*. The clinging with the body to a drifting wood is not one of the habits of the hollow between two waves. When the foam flies from the wave it is not a living creature, nor is it clothed in fine ornaments (*hyrste*, a word used for the feathered robe of the swan). The furrow of the wave may be black and white, but in that condition it is not borne into the air, nor far and wide over the sea. But the Barnacle is almost altogether in black and white. "The bill is black, the head as far as the crown, together with cheeks and throat is white — the rest of the head and neck to the breast and shoulders black. The upper plumage is marbled with blue-gray, black and white. The feathers of back and wings are black edged with white, the underparts are white, the tail black." Then the rest of the Riddle agrees with the old account given in Gerarde's *Herball*, which I quote here: "There is a small Ilande in Lancashire called the Pile of Foulders, wherein are found the broken peeces of old and brused ships, some whereof have been cast thither by shipwracke, and also the trunks or bodies with the branches of old and rotten trees, cast up there likewise; whereon is found a certaine spume or froth, that in time breedeth unto certaine shels, in shape like those of the muskle but sharper pointed, and of a whitish colour, wherein is conteined a thing in form like a lace of silke finely woven, as it were, together of a whitish colour; one end whereof is fastened unto the inside of the shell, even as the fish of Oisters and Muskles are; the other end is made faste unto the belly of a rude masse or lump, which in time commeth to the shape and forme of a Bird. When it is perfectly formed, the shel gapeth open, and the first thing that appeareth is the foresaid lace or string; next come the legs of the Birde hanging out, and as it groweth greater, it openeth the shell by degrees, till at length it is all come foorth, and hangeth only by the bill, in short space after it commeth to full maturitie, and falleth into the sea, where it gathereth feathers, and groweth to a foule, bigger than a Mallard, and lesser than a Goose; having blacke legs and bill or beake, and feathers blacke and white, and spotted in such a manner as in our Magge-Pie." — Gerarde's *Herball*, p. 1391 [pub. 1597].

But the chief thing which engaged the dwellers in the stormy north was the fierce weather on the sea. The whole of the descriptions which follow make me almost certain that Cynewulf lived for a great part of his life on the sea coast. It seems quite impossible that an inland person — and there are those who hint at his being a Mercian — could have described the doings of the deep so accurately. Descriptions of this close quality — all the right things said and the unnecessary details left out — are only made after long experience.

In the *Andreas* the weather of Northumbria is described, and it is as wild and hard as that of which we hear in *Beowulf*, and are told of in the *Seafarer*. It is the description, as will be seen, of one who dwelt near the sea —

> Snow did bind the earth
> With the whirling winter-flakes ; and the weathers grew
> Cold with savage scours of hail ; while the sleet and frost —
> Gangers gray of war were they — locked the granges up
> Of the heroes, and folk-hamlets ! Frozen hard were lands
> With the chilly icicles ; Shrunk the courage of the water ;
> O'er the running rivers ice upraised a bridge ;
> And the Sea-road shone. *Andreas*, l. 1255.

The same kind of weather is spoken of in the *Wanderer* and the *Seafarer*. "The storms lash the overhanging cliffs, the falling sleet binds up the fields, the wan terror of the winter comes, the shadow of night comes darkling on, and out of the north sends the fierce hailstorm for the troubling of men." So says the Wanderer, and the Seafarer mourns the like upon his ship. His feet are bound with the bands of frost, he is hung with icicles, the hail flies round him in showers, the sea is icy cold. All the poetry is full of the fury of the hail. Even in the *Rune Song* the poet, when he has called it, conventionally, the "whitest of corns," passes on, thrilled by what he has seen, to describe how when the tempest is at its height, the hail is whirled through the lift, as if it were snow — mingled and tossed by the squalls of wind, — for so I must translate *windes scura*, showers of wind. A similar passage in the *Gnomic Verses* speaks of the shower coming up the sky blended into one with the wind. Midst of this weather, were the desperate tempests of the Northern coast, and a short passage in the same *Verses* brings together with some force the universal disturbance of sea and sky and waters of the earth in the fierce gale. "The salt sea shall toss in waves, and the helm of the air, and the water-

floods ; and o'er every land rush down the mountain streams." But it is Cynewulf who chiefly loves the tempests. He paints, with all the vigour of the North, the ice-floe plunging and roaring through the foaming sea, and shouting out, like a Viking, his coming to the land, singing and laughing terribly. Sharp are the swords he uses in the battle (the knife-edges of the ice), grim is his hate, he is greedy for the battle.[1] He breaks into the shield walls (the sides of the ships ranged along with shields), binds, like a wizard, runes of slaughter. "Such a hero," says Prehn, to whom I refer,[2] "may well boast of his ancestors." "My mother," he cries, "is of the maiden-kin ; my daughter is waxen strong." His mother was the water, and his daughter was also the water — mother and daughter the same. Symphosius and Tatwine dwell on this fancy with regard to snow and ice. In the *Ænigmata veterum poetarum* we meet it — "Mater me genuit, eadem mox gignitur ex me." And again "Quam mater genuit, generavit filia matrem." But Cynewulf only brings in this fancy at the end of his riddle. The rest — the audacious Ice Viking, victoriously dashing through the sea, with all his ship ringing as it goes, and he himself shouting on the prow, — that is Cynewulf's alone, and it is another illustration of the absurdity of those who pass over these riddles of his as a mere imitation of the Latin. Here is the Riddle (xxxiv.) —

Came a wondrous wight o'er the waves a-faring ;
Comely from his keel called he to the land.
Loudly did he shout, and his laughter dreadful was,
Full of terror to the Earth ! Sharp the edges of his swords,
Grim was then his hate. He was greedy for the slaughter,
Bitter in the battle work ; broke into the shield walls ;
Rough and ravaging his way ; and a rune of hate he bound.
Then, all-skilled in craft, he said, about himself, his nature —
"Of the maiden kin is my mother known ;
Of them all the dearest, so that now my daughter is
Waxen up to mightiness." . . . .

That is a particular aspect of storm, but Cynewulf draws the storms themselves, with all their characteristics on land and sea, and with such extraordinary force and fire that it seems as if these three short poems concentrated into their space all

[1] Grein translates, *Zum Kampfe geneigt.* "Sluggish to the battle" seems the literal meaning, but Grein evidently felt that this was not in harmony with the text, though I do not understand what reading he conjectures. It might, however, mean slow in beginning the war, but when engaged, bitter in battle-work, and the phrase might well apply to an iceberg.

[2] *Komposition und Quellen der Rätsel des Exeterbuches*, p. 205.

the storms he had seen in his life. The first describes the storm on land, the second at sea, and the third the universal tempest —the living Being who rises from his caverns under earth, and does his great business, first on the sea, then on the cliffs and ships, then on the land, and then among the clouds, till he sinks to rest again. They are all worth translating, chiefly for their poetry, but also because they are full of remnants of heathenism, of mythical images of natural phenomena, of phrases which those who care for natural folk-lore would have pleasure in illustrating. Here is the first — A Storm on land (Rid. ii.) —

Who so wary and so wise of the warriors lives,
That he dare declare who doth drive me on my way,
When I start up in my strength! Oft in stormy wrath,
Hugely then I thunder, tear along in gusts,
Fare[1] above the floor of earth, burn the folk-halls down,
Ravage all the rooms! Then the reek ariseth
Gray above the gables? Great on earth the din,
And the slaughter-qualm of men. Then I shake the woodland,
Forests rich in fruits; then I fell the trees; —
I with water over-vaulted — by the wondrous Powers
Sent upon my way, far and wide to drive along!
On my back I carry that which covered once
All the tribes of Earth's indwellers, spirits and all flesh,
In the sand together![2] Say who shuts me in,
Or what is my name — I who bear this burden!

The next (Riddle iii.) is the Sea-storm —

Whiles, my way I take, how men ween it not,
Under seething[3] of the surges, seeking out the earth,
Ocean's deep abyss: all a-stirred the sea is.
Urged the flood is then, whirled the foam on high;
Fiercely wails the whale-mere, wrathful roars aloud;
Beat the sea-streams on the shore shooting momently on high,
On the soaring cliffs with the sand and stones,
With the weed and wave.[4] But I, warring on,
Shrouded with the ocean's mass, stir into the earth

[1] *Fere* may be "terribly." [2] The water of the Flood.

[3] *Gepraec* is "thronging," the fierce crowding together of the waves. I have put "seething," for the sake of alliteration.

[4] A similar passage occurs in the *Christ* describing the cliffs withstanding the waves. The fire of judgment has passed over the earth, and while the cliffs melt in the heat Cynewulf recalls how he had seen them of old —

Tumble down in ruin
All the broken burg-walls, and the mountains melt,
And the high cliffs that of old, 'gainst the heaving sea,
'Gainst the floods fast rooted, guarded all the field of earth;
Strong and steadfast stood, bulwarks 'gainst the surges,
'Gainst the war of waters. *Christ*, l. 977.

Into vasty sea-grounds! From the water's helm
I may not on journey loose me, ere he let me go
Who my master is. —[1] Say, O Man of thought,
Who may draw me (like a sword) from the bosomed depths of ocean,
When the streams again on the sea are still,
And the surges silent that shrouded me before?

The next Riddle (iv.) is yet finer than these. Cynewulf was not one of those small poets whom a single effort on one subject exhausts. Moreover, he has not yet treated the work of the wind among the clouds and sky, and this he will now do, combining it with entirely new descriptions of the storm as it traverses the land and upraises the ocean. We scarcely expect that unconscious art, which is often the highest, in an early Anglo-Saxon poem, but the order and unity of this poem is admirable. The imaginative logic of its arrangement is like that which prevails in the "Ode to the West Wind," to which, indeed, it presents many points of resemblance, even to isolated phrases. Shelley tells us of his wind — which, as in Cynewulf's poem, is a living being — first, as flying through the forests and the land, then of its work among the clouds, then on and in the sea, then on his own soul. Cynewulf tells of his storm-giant rising from his lair, rushing over the sea, then over the land, and then in the sky, but not of the storm in his own breast. That is the one modern quality we do not find in this poem of Cynewulf. It was natural for him — being closer to Nature-worship than Shelley — to impersonate his Hurricane, to make the clouds into stalking phantoms, to make them pour water from their womb and to sweat forth fire; and his work in this is noble. Shelley, who was himself an ancient Nature-worshipper born out of due time, a maker of Nature-myths, and as innocent as a young Aryan in doing so, is on that account very like Cynewulf when both are writing about natural phenomena. Both of them write as the people talked in old time about the Wind, and the Clouds, and the Sea; and in Cynewulf's case this is all the plainer when we compare his work with the riddles on the same subject which Ealdhelm and Eusebius put forth, which use the classical conventions, and which gave to Cynewulf nothing but the theme of his poem —

1. Oftenwhiles my Wielder weighs me firmly down,
Then again he urges my immeasurable breast
Underneath the fruitful fields, forces me to rest.

[1] Or, "Who my master is on every journey."

Drives me down to darkness, me, the doughty warrior,
Pins [1] me down in prison, where upon my back
Sits the Earth, my jailor. No escape have I
From that savage sorrow — but I mightily shake then
Heirships old of heroes! Totter then the hornèd halls,
Village-steads of men; all the walls are rocking
High above the house-wards.

This is the introduction; the great giant power, clamped, like Enceladus, below the earth in the prison of dark caverns, the Earth seated on his back. Like Enceladus too, whom Cynewulf seems to have in mind, the giant turns and heaves in his sorrow, and then the earthquake is among the homes of men. Now his master lets him loose, but before he comes, air and sea are still —

10. Calm abideth
O'er the land, the lift; lullèd is the sea;
Till that I from thraldom outwards thrust my way,
Howsoe'er He leads me on, who of old had laid
At creation's dawning wreathen chains on me,
With their braces, with their bands, that I might not bend me
Out of his great Power who points me out my paths.

The Storm now begins to work upon the sea, and Cynewulf introduces human interest in the ship —

17. Sometimes shall I, from above, make the surges seethe,
Stir up the sea-streamings, and to shore crush on
Gray as flint, the flood; foaming fighteth then
'Gainst the wall of rock, the wave! Wan ariseth now
O'er the deep a mountain-down; [2] darkening on its track
Follows on another with all ocean blended.
Till they (now commingled), near the mark of land and sea
Meet the lofty linches.[3] Loud is then the Sea-wood,

[1] "Pins me down" is, literally, "dashes, and presses me down." Compare with these lines, and with 13–16 —

In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits. *The Cloud.*

Also —

Hic vasto rex Æolus antro
Luctantes ventos tempestatesque sonoras
Imperio premit ac vinclis et carcere frenat.
Illi indignantes magno cum murmure montis
Circum claustra fremunt. . . .
Sed Pater omnipotens speluncis abdidit atris
Hoc metuens, molemque et montes insuper altos
Imposuit. . . . *Æneid*, i. 56.

There are many phrases in Cynewulf's poetry which lead me to think that he was not unacquainted with Virgil. See the next note.

[2] *Insequitur cumulo praeruptus aquae mons.* *Wan* is of course "black."

[3] *Hlincas* ("linches, *i.e.* the cliffs"). See Halliwell and Skeat. Dictionaries.

Loud the seamen's shout.[1] But the stony cliffs,
Rising steep, in stillness wait of the sea the onset;
Battle-whirl of billows, when the high upbreak of water
Crashes on the cliffs. In the keel is dread expecting[2]
With despairing striving, lest the sea should bear it
Full of living ghosts on to that grim hour (of death);[3]
So that of its steering power[4] it should be bereft;
And of living crew forfoughten,[5] foaming drift away
On the shoulders of the surges. Then is shown to men
Many of the terrors there of Those I must obey —
I upon the storm-path strong! Who makes that be still?

Now follows the way of the tempest in the air, the war of the clouds, and then the terror upon earth —

36. Whiles I rush along thorough that which rides my back,
Vats of water black: wide asunder do I thrust them
Full of lakes of rain; then again I let them
Glide together. Greatest that is of all sounds,
Of all tumults over towns, and of thunderings the loudest,
When one stormy shower rattles sharp against another,
Sword against a sword. See, the swarthy shapes,
Forward pressing o'er the peoples, sweat their fire forth;
Flaring is the flashing! Onward fare the thunders,
Gloomed, above the multitudes, with a mickle din;
Fighting fling along; and let fall adown
Swarthy sap of showers sounding[6] from their breast,
Waters from their womb. Waging war they go,
Grisly troop on troop; Terror rises up!
Mickle is the misery 'mid the kin of men;
In the burgs is panic when the phantom pale
Shoots with his sharp weapons, stalking (through the sky).
Then the dullard does not dread him of the deadly spears;
Nathless shall he surely die, if the soothfast Lord
Right against him, through the rain-cloud,
From the upper thunder, let the arrow fly —
Dart that fareth fast! Few are they that 'scape

[1] *Insequitur clamorque virûm stridorque rudentum.*

[2] This is an extremely difficult passage, and I have varied considerably from other translators. *Slíðre saecce* — "with slippery (Grein makes it 'dangerous'), with feeble striving" — may, I think, mean what I make it, with a hapless, ill-fortuned, and therefore a despairing strife against the elements. Some are paralysed in expectation, some struggle; *that* is, I think, the meaning.

[3] *On þâ grimman tid* may, of course, mean "in that grim hour;" but I think it alludes to the moment in which the ship would be driven on the cliffs.

[4] Is *Rice* from *ricu* ("direction")? Did Cynewulf see the steering oar whirled from the hands of the steersman, or does he mean that the ship was driven out of its true course?

[5] *Bifohten.* The verb *bi-feohtan* means to deprive one of anything by fighting. The ship was deprived of its living souls by the war of the wind and sea with it.

[6] I should like to have in English the German word *summen*, which answers here to *sumsend*, and translate this *sûmming*. "Sounding" does not give the humming hiss of the rain.

Whom the spear doth strike of the Spirit of the rain.
I beginning make of this gruesome war
When I rush on high 'mid the roaring shock of clouds.
Through their thundering throng to press with a triumph great,
O'er the breast of torrents![1] Bursts out with a roar
The high congregated cloud-band.[2]
Then my crest again I bow,
Low the Lift-helm under, to the land anearer;
And I heap upon my back that I have to bear,
By the might commanded of my mastering Lord.

And now he ends with a passage which, with a fine art, collects together all the action of the Tempest, and brings it back to its cavern, having had a great joy, in obedient quiet —

67. So do I, a strongful servant, often strive in war!
Sometimes under earth am I; then again I must
Stoop beneath the surges deep; then above the surface-sea
Stir to storm its streams. Then I soar on high,
Whirl the wind-drift of the clouds. Far and wide I go,
Swift and strong (for joy). Say what I am called,
Or who lifts me up to life, when I may no longer rest;
Or who it is that stays me, when I'm still again.

Such was the way a great Northern gale impressed a Northern poet who had dwelt by the sea, and who himself, as I believe, had gone down into the sea in ships and battled with the storm.

The passages, out of the *Elene* and the *Christ*, with which I close this chapter, and which we are certain Cynewulf wrote, not only go far to prove that their writer was the writer of

[1] The word I here translate torrents is *burnan* ("of burns or brooks"). Torrents is quite fair, for the word is connected with *burnan* ("to burn"). The upsurging and boiling of fire is attributed to the fountain and stream. Cynewulf is not thinking of the quiet brooks of the land, but of the furious leaping rivers which he conceives as hidden in the storm clouds over which the storm giant passes on his way.

[2] *Hlod-geeriod*. *Hlod* is the name given to a "band of robbers from seven to thirty-five," hence any troop or band of men. *Geeriod* is "a crowd," "a multitude." Thus compounded the word means, I think, a crowd made up of troops; of troops of clouds! Then the word "high" put with *hlod-geeriod* and the context prove sufficiently that Cynewulf was thinking of the piled-up clouds of the storm; and no doubt the notion of ravaging and slaughter connected with *Hlod* pleased his imagination, for his Tempest is a Destroyer.

I quote the line from Shelley which suggested my use of the word "congregated." The two lines which follow may also be compared with the previous passage (ll. 42–48) —

Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire and hail will burst. O, hear!

Compare also —

The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow.

this fourth riddle, so closely do they parallel it, but are also examples of the symbolic use of the sea and the storm in Christian illustration; of the use by the poet in his old age of the wonderful things he had observed when young.[1] The first, like the passage in the Riddle, thinks of the giant wind pressed down in his cavern, and perhaps of the mythic wild-hunt in the clouds —

Wealth below the sky shall fail; all the splendour of the land
'Neath the welkin vanisheth; to the Wind most like
When he, over heroes, high and loudly mounts the sky;
Through the clouds he hunts, hurries, raging on;
Then, upon a sudden, silent is again,
In his prison cave narrowly pressed down,
Overwhelmed with woes. *Elene*, l. 1269.

The last I give is full of personal interest, of an old man's remembrance of his sea-voyages; of his troubles like the troubles of the world's stormy sea, of gratitude to God who piloted his bark to the haven where he would be, of longing such as age may have for the fulness of his rest —

Mickle is our need
That in this unfruitful time, ere that fearful Dread,
On our spirits' fairness we should studiously bethink us!
Now most like it is as if we on lake of ocean,
O'er the water cold in our keels are sailing,
And through spacious sea, with our stallions of the Sound,
Forward drive the flood-wood. Fearful is the stream
Of immeasurable surges that we sail on here,
Through this wavering world, through these windy oceans,
O'er the path profound. Perilous our state of life
Ere that we had sailed (our ship) to the shore (at last),
O'er the rough sea-ridges. Then there reached us help,
That to hithe of Healing homeward led us on —
He the Spirit-Son of God! And he dealt us grace,
So that we should be aware, from the vessel's deck,
Where our stallions of the sea we might stay with ropes,
Fast a-riding by their anchors — ancient horses of the waves!
Let us in that haven then all our hope establish,

[1] It has been said that elaborate similes are not to be found in Anglo-Saxon poetry. It should be understood that the remark only applies to the earlier poetry. Cynewulf uses a number, of which the two above are examples. There are many more in his work. There is one also in the *Genesis*, but its age is doubtful. I give here another which belongs to the subject of this chapter, and which is to be found in the *Gnomic Verses*. I daresay it is of the ninth century —

As the sea is smooth,
When the wind waketh it not,
So are the people at peace, when they have settled their strife!
In happy state they sit, and then, with comrades, hold,
Brave men, their native land. *Gn. V.* (Exon.) l. 55.

Which the ruler of the Æther there has roomed for us,
When He climbed to Heaven — Holy in the Highest!
Christ, l. 848.

To compare these lines, written when Cynewulf was advanced in years, with the poem of the *Hurricane*, written when he was young, has more than a transient interest. And no artist can read both at the same time without having a higher pleasure than the ordinary reader. He will feel the same personality in both, but working, with how different a life behind the poetry, with how different an impulse; in how different a fashion and from how changed a character! Youth, moved out of itself by Nature, and looking neither before nor after, is in the earlier poem. The passion in it is untouched by the weight of the sorrows or duties of manhood, or by the sense of sin and the cry for redemption. These pains and burdens, on the contrary, as well as the soul wrapt in self-consciousness, are present in the later verses. Such a contrast makes Cynewulf real to us; and the change — I will not call it artistic progress, though at certain points it is so — does at least enable us to say, This man was an artist.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTIANITY AND LITERATURE

The matters of which we have treated in the three previous chapters do not belong especially either to heathenism or Christianity. They may rather be called secular. All that had to do with the affairs of arms was as much heathen as Christian; and the same may be said with regard to the greater part of the poetry quoted to illustrate the daily life of our forefathers. We cannot altogether say this when we consider the poetry of natural description. I do not think that the remarkable descriptions of the sea and its storms and of various aspects of nature could have been written by the heathen English. The temper of these poems is not at all the old Teutonic temper. They are too contemplative for English heathendom. Nevertheless some of their spirit goes back to other heathendoms than the Teutonic, and goes back through the advent of Christianity. It was the Celtic missionaries who evangelised Northumbria, and through them the Celtic feeling for nature was imported into English poetry. Along with this, Latin Christianity brought with it Roman poetry, and Virgil and Ovid gave to the Northumbrian poets a fresh and kindling impulse to the observation and love of Nature.

Beyond these impulses, however, the coming of Christianity poured into the river of the English imagination a multitude of new tributary streams, enlarged its waters, enriched its constituents, purified, mellowed, and deepened it. It did more; these new streams were of various elements, and though, at first, they did not isolate themselves into distinct currents, yet, as time went on, and they assimilated what was necessary for their separate existence, they became self-conscious streams of poetry within the general stream. What Christianity thus did for literature, what it modified of the past, what it originated for the future, what powers it added to that emotional life from which poetry urges itself upwards into form, what it weakened

and strengthened, restricted and enlarged, is the subject of this and the following chapter.

When we consider Christianity in contact with those heathen elements, so many of which, as pregnant motives of poetry, have continued in our literature, the first thing to be said is that, owing to the manner in which Christianity was propagated in England, it did not root out heathen ideas so much as change them. Its growth was left to the will of the people; to persuasion and not to force. The sword had no part, as on the Continent, as among the Northmen, in the evangelising of England. In no modern land that Jesus won was his conquest so gentle, so marked by tolerance and good sense. Hence Christianity was subject for a long time to interruptions and reactions. For nearly eighty years the heathen and Christian faiths were in close contact, and each preserved its freedom of development. The old battle songs were sung side by side with the Christian hymns, the sagas of the English heroes with the saga of Christ; the Christian Church, on the hill or by the river, saw during a varying term of years, and without any fierce religious fury, the heathen temple in the neighbouring grove. There was a long mingling then, in a peaceful fashion, of Christian and heathen thought; and through the mingling ran a special temper of tolerance and wisdom and good-breeding. These two things, both of which were vital influences on English literature, are best illustrated by a brief but necessary account of the various changes which marked the conversion of England.

It was in the year 597 that Augustine brought the gospel to Kent, and King Æthelberht (partly prepared by his wife) listened to it graciously. A speech of his, which Erasmus might have fathered, strikes the key-note of the manner in which Christianity was spread in England by the kings, and indeed by the bishops.[1] "Your words," said Æthelberht, "and promises sound very good to me, but they are new to us, and of uncertain meaning; I cannot so far yield to them as to abandon all that I and the whole English people have for so long observed.

[1] There were but few exceptions. Episcopal violence seems to have been retained between Christian and Christian, not between Christian and heathen. Augustine was gentle enough, though he was a vain man, with Æthelberht and the Kentish heathen, but his manners with the Welsh monks were not of the same type. But then the Welsh were Christians, not heathen, and they were not in harmony with Rome. It would not have been politic for Augustine to have anything to do with the Welsh. It was more easy for Rome to be tolerant to ignorant heathen than to Christians who differed from her formulæ. And the keeping of Easter at a different date from Rome was a very serious thing; it touched the headship of Rome. Even Baeda seems to lose his temper over it.

But since you are strangers and have come from a far land, and desire to tell us what you hold to be true and good, we will do you no harm, but will give you food and a place to dwell in, and you may speak to my people and win over as many as you can to your belief;" which things he did, and was himself shortly afterwards, with many of his people, baptized. But he "compelled none to embrace the faith," so that many still remained heathen.

In 604 the East Saxons, under Saeberht, Æthelberht's nephew, were converted, and Æthelberht founded St. Paul's in London for his nephew. Eadbald, son of Æthelberht, became King of the Kentishmen in 616. He had refused to receive the faith of Christ. Even when he became Christian, he was unable to take any strong measures against idolatry (E. H., ii. 6); and I think it possible that Kent in a large measure relapsed. It is plain that London went back into heathendom when Saeberht died. His three sons were all pagans, and the wild disturbance they made in the church — crying out to the bishop who was administering the Eucharist, "Why not give us the white bread you gave to our father?" — illustrates how close the English world was then to Paganism, how little the fear of Rome was in their hearts.

When we travel North we find much the same wavering state of things. Eadwine of Deira was baptized, 12th April 627, with all his people, by Paullinus. When he died in 633, a whole year passed by before Oswald came to the throne and Northumbria slipped back into heathenism, but after Oswald's accession the conversion of the country went on steadily. Paullinus, it is true, had fled, but Oswald sent messengers to the elders of the Scots who had baptized him when in exile, and Aidan descended from Iona to teach Northumbria. At Lindisfarne his bishop's seat was set, and from that desolate rock he and his successors evangelised Northumbria;[1] but in all the wilder and more inaccessible parts the people long continued heathen. Meanwhile the half-and-half condition of England can be further illustrated by the story of Raedwald. Raedwald, who was King of East Anglia till about 627, had become a Christian in Kent, but on his return home his wife seduced him back to heathenism. Nevertheless he made the best of both worlds; for he set up

[1] They went also through other parts of England before the Synod of Whitby, but their chief work was in the North; and it must always be remembered, as one of the causes of certain elements in the Anglo-Saxon poetry of Northumbria, that the religion of the North — that is, the greatest source of popular emotion — came to the people through the Celtic character.

two altars in the same temple, one to Christ and another to his gods. One of Baeda's contemporaries had seen these altars when he was a boy. His son Eorpwald became a Christian, but was slain by a pagan, under whom the province was again heathen for three years. Then Sigeberht came to the throne, who, having embraced the Christian faith in Gaul and become a man of learning, made all East Anglia Christian in the years between 631–634.

In 635 the West Saxons, who were confirmed pagans, received the faith in the person of Cynegils their king, under the influence and in the presence of Oswald, who took the West Saxon "to son" at Dorchester, a town which for about forty years was the ecclesiastical centre of Wessex. His son Coenwalch was still a heathen on his accession in 643, but three years later was baptized. He is the traditionary founder of the great church at Winchester, a town which in after years was the cradle of English prose; and he secured Glastonbury for England with all its venerable traditions and its names so dear to after literature. In the meantime, Kent, under Earcomberht, son of Eadbald, had become altogether Christian. This king, succeeding his father in 640, uprooted heathenism. It took then forty-three years to make Kent, where the faith was first preached, completely Christian.

In 653 the East Saxons, who had relapsed under those three stormy young men, were brought back to the faith by Sigeberht and by the preaching of Cedda; but a pestilence breaking out among them in 665, a great number of them restored the old temples, but were reconverted — an unstable and fierce folk — within the year. Five years, then, before Caedmon wrote, heathenism had not been forgotten. This becomes still plainer when we think of the state of Mercia during this time. Penda, king of that province, came into lordship over it in 626. From that date till 655, when he was slain, he fought with stern consistency for the faith of his fathers — the terror and the admiration of Middle and Northern England. The wars he urged were, however, more political than religious. No persuasion could change his faith, but he ceased to persecute the Christians. He did not even prevent the preaching of their faith. He contented himself with sneering at those Christians who did not live up to the commandments of their God. His son Peada, whom he made viceroy of the Middle Angles, became Christian in 653 and introduced four Northumbrian priests into his province. Penda did not stand in the way, but I cannot help feeling that the old heathen suffered sorely when he felt

his strife had been in vain. Two years after he was slain near Winwaed, and on his death all Mercia became Christian. Nine years later (664) — a date always to be remembered — the whole of Christian England came, after the Synod of Whitby, into the Roman observance of Easter. The short career of Celtic Christianity closed. It had lasted from 635 — a period of twenty-nine years — and its spirit continued a little longer in the persons of those bishops and priests of its race who, choosing to stay when the others went back to Scotland, retained their charges and conformed to the Roman custom. Five years later (in 669–671) Theodore of Tarsus and Hadrian of Africa came from Rome to England, the first to be Archbishop of Canterbury, the second as his sub-deacon. These two not only brought Greek learning to England; they also began Latin-English literature in the south, and we shall discuss their work in its proper place. All we have to say here is that with the arrival of Roman and Greek literature in England any future development of purely heathen poetry received its deathblow; and that this blow was given over the whole of England — for Theodore, before he died in 690, had welded all England into one spiritual kingdom, in one National Church, under one form of belief and practice. Now, when the Church was one, one spirit began to pervade all literature. Yet it was not till within four years of his death that we can say that all England was Christian. In 681 the South Saxons were still heathen to the number of seven thousand families, though their king and some of his comrades had been baptized. These were now delivered by the preaching of Wilfrid from the "wretchedness of eternal damnation." One small space of land yet existed in darkness — the Isle of Wight, a colony of Jutes. It was conquered in 686 by Caedwalla of Wessex, and he handed the place over to Wilfrid for evangelisation. That, then, is the date in which the long strife, which had begun in 597, between Christianity and heathenism, finally closed in England. It closed among all the upper classes, but among the small farmers and labourers in the remote parts of the country, in hamlets of the woods and moors, heathenism for a long time retained its influence.[1] For a still longer time heathenism and

[1] Baeda tells, in his *Life of Cuthbert*, chap. iii., how, when the boats bringing wood to the monastery near the mouth of the Tyne were swept out to sea, and the monks tried in vain to rescue them, the multitude of country folk who stood on the shore mocked the servants of God, — they deserved, they said, to suffer this loss, since they had left off the old ways of life. Cuthbert reproved them, and they answered angrily, "Nobody shall pray for them; may God spare none of them; they have taken away from men the ancient rites and

Christianity intermingled. Many men, like the bards, lived, I think, in both worlds; the rights and beliefs of either religion took one another's clothing; the people reverted to heathen practices and then back again to Christian in times of trouble; the laws right up to the time of Cnut are still "forbidding heathendom, the worship of heathen gods, of sun and moon, rivers and wells, fire, stones, and trees."

This account fully confirms the long contemporary existence of Christian and heathen elements; and during their mutual ebb and flow there was a continual mingling and interpenetration of Christian and heathen legend, of Christian and heathen poetry which had its influence on literature. The two worlds of song met and knew one another. Heathen ideas and expressions entered into Christian poetry, and it is possible that the heathen sagas and lays were penetrated by some of the Christian gentleness. We cannot say how much of this interpenetration was left behind in the whole body of popular poetry of which we have no record, nor how much has filtered down to us. At least, as I shall proceed to show, the whole body of popular thought and feeling, out of which the unwritten poetry of the emotions arises before it is shaped into a written form, was filled with the interwoven ideas of Christianity and heathendom.

It would have been a pity, in the interests of Literature, if the romantic elements of the old heathendom, especially those which arose out of the personification of the savage or gentle forms of the life of Nature, had been blotted out by Christianity. To have wholly lost the image of the dark, relentless, and all-compelling Wyrd would have weakened the root of imaginative poetry. To be no longer able to see the sun hasting up the sky like an eager youth, or the moon building her treasure-house in the topmost Burg of Heaven, to hear no more the rustling sound — *daegred-woma*, — the "thrill of Nature which precedes the dawn," to fear or cajole no more the beings who moved in the storm cloud or drove the waves, the creatures who dwelt in streams or trees, in wells, among the gray stones of the moor, in the mist, and the secret places of the waters — would have drained dry the river of the love and awe of living Nature, which, long flowing only among the uneducated people, has, at last, in these later days, risen to the surface even of society, and still moves forward a fuller

customs, and how the new ones are to be attended to, nobody knows." If this could be said at Tynemouth, what must have been said far inland in the wilder parts?

and a fuller stream in the Poetry of England. Our modern passion for a soul in Nature is a recurrence to the original heathen type. Myth incessantly revives in the poetry of Nature, and the greater its recurrence the better is that kind of poetry. In England these romantic, mythical elements were, I think, preserved in better form than elsewhere. The long intermingling, the soft interchange of heathenism and Christianity did not exile the captured deities, or utterly destroy the old habits of worship, but took them into service, gave them new names, and clothed them in Christian garments. The great Nature-festivals of the heathen, Yule and Eostra-tide, were now bound up with the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The festival of Midsummer lasts in many Christian observances. New Christian feasts were made to fall on heathen holidays. A great part, then, of the emotions of the past, of the pleasant rustic joy, of the ancient poetic imaginations was retained in the new religion, and made more permanent by the Celtic spirit in that religion. Being retained, it became a continuous power in national sentiment, and therefore in all our literature. Nor did the new Christianity let slip away the associations which belonged to the time-honoured religious customs. The Church was built where the heathen temple had been, and the people walked to the shrine of Christ by the same well-worn path by which they had sought the sacred enclosure of the god. Where the consecrated tree had stood rose now the Holy Rood. The groves, devoted to the Nature-god, became the groves of the convent. The hills, the clear wells, the eyots in the river which had been dedicated to heathen deities of flood and field, were now called after the saints and martyrs; and the old emotions were retained unimpaired, though the names were changed. The minor gods and heroes which the various wants of men had created to preside over and to satisfy those wants were replaced by saints who did precisely the same work. The personages were different, but the Polytheism, with all its romance, remained. Even the nature myths were often continued in the legends of the saints. Moreover, "laws and usages," says Grimm, "ordeals and oath-takings, beating of bounds, consecrations, image processions, spells and formulas were clothed in Christian forms, but their heathen character endured. The old was interwoven with the new." Thus Christian stuff was heathenised, heathen stuff was Christianised.

Again, what was gracious and beneficent in the doings of the

heathen gods was kept in the Christian thought, but it was now done, not by Frea (if the earliest English worshipped Frea), or by goddesses who were kind to men, but by Jesus Christ and the Virgin. On the other hand, the dark and dreadful elements of Nature, personified in giant and monster, were not lost as poetry, but added to the conceptions of the devil and his harmful host, among whom were now included the Elves, the wood creatures, and the dwarfs; even all the gentle beings who, in old days, wished well to man, and who afterwards emerged from this devilish connection into the kindly and tricksome fairies. The Church grew sharper against the gentlehood of heathendom as time went on. Up to about 800 A.D. piety was, however, not importunate. But after that time the ancient and nobler ancestor deities, in order to destroy their moral character, were all, by means of the transference of their attributes to the devil, made hideous or absurd. Yet, though their moral character was destroyed, what was poetic in their history lived on in legends, or, in a better way, in a number of fantastic words and images in common use among the people.

Another form of transference is seen in the case of the most widespread of the heathen myths. The war of Day and Night, the still greater war of Summer and Winter, of the radiant Sunny-Gods and the Frost-Giants, of the healing and harmful powers of Nature — that war, which is one of the ever-during roots of poetry, became now, in varied forms, the war between Christ and Satan, between eternal Light and eternal Darkness, between the Church and Heathenism, between the Saint and his Tempter, between God in the Universe and the old Dragon who claimed the dominion over Earth and Air, — but whatever shape the changes took, the original spirit of the myth is preserved. Its poetry — the poetry of a fierce, adventurous, unending war, various as are the fates and characters of men, shared in by all the spiritual powers beyond our world, a battle in which Earth, Heaven and Hell were mingled, — the mightiest Epic the wit and passion of men have ever conceived — was not made less but more imaginative by Christianity; and the range of the subject was extended. In this world-wide war which transcended the local wars of tribe with tribe and kingdom with kingdom, Jesus was the King, his Apostles were the King's thegns, and so were all the saints and martyrs, nay, every one who fought against the Dragon. Satan is the great foe whose seat is in the North before he falls into Hell. Hell is the dark-Burg which Christ attacks, Heaven the light-Burg to which he returns in victory. The supper of the Lamb is

laid for his warriors in the great hall, amid the singing of the Angels who are the poets of the battle. When the Apostles are celebrated, as they are in a poem in the Vercelli book, they are heroes who go forth to war, and their work is told as if it were a Viking expedition. "Great proof of valour gave these Æthelings; far spread the might and glory of the King's thegns over the earth. Bold in war was Andreas; not tardy was James, nor a laggard on the journey. Daring was the adventure of Thomas in India; he endured the rush of swords." Simon and Thaddeus, "warriors brave in battle, valiantly sought the Persian land; not slow were they in the fight, in the play of shields." Andrew in the *Andreas* is "the hero stout in battle, the steadfast champion," even the "beast of battle" (*hilde-deor*), "the hero hard in war." These are a few expressions out of many in which the heathen terms of war are transferred to the apostolic soldiers of Jesus. Round about them are collected their thegns, those who accompany them on missions; and all the devotion which tied the thegn to his lord in heathen war, all the disgrace which befell the thegn who was unfaithful, are transferred to the relation of the Apostles to Christ, and of their followers to the Apostle and the Saint. Nor was the war only in the present or the future, nor only since the time of Christ. All the past since the beginning of the world was filled with it. David, Moses, Noah, Adam replaced the English demigods, and were their national heroes. A trace of this is found in the genealogy of Æthelwulf as given in the *Chronicle*. He is brought back from Woden to Sceaf, and Sceaf is the son of Noah, born in the Ark, and Noah carries the line back to Adam; that is, the patriarchs become one with the ancestral heroes. Even before time, when man was not, this war that filled their imagination had prevailed, and the battle in Heaven of Christ with Satan is described in Caedmonic poems in much the same terms as the contest of Beowulf with Grendel. Thus little of the imaginative passion of war was lost to the Christian Englishman, and nothing of the worship of heroic and divine ancestors. The field open to their warlike imagination was doubly expanded; nor was it only the noble or the freeman who could join in this fight and find fame in it, but all men and all women, no matter how common their position or enslaved their work.

The central point of the war was the victory of Jesus, and round this, as well as the final finish of the war in the second coming of the King, the force of the poetry collected. Only one other point was as poetical. It was the beginning of the

war in Heaven, at the time of the creation of man. That beginning is treated, as we shall see, in the *Genesis*. The victory of Christ and the Judgment are best done by Cynewulf. The Incarnation and the Crucifixion are fully treated, but the Resurrection is scarcely touched in Anglo-Saxon poetry. That which more attracted English imagination was the Harrowing of Hell, the legendary event that followed the Resurrection, — and this, with the return in triumph to the heavenly home, is described in images such as belonged to heathen war and victory. In a similar saga fashion the end of the war is described — the Doomsday — the final overthrow of evil, the final victory of righteousness.

The change, then, retained a good deal of the old poetic elements. Nevertheless there was also a loss; much perished which we would gladly have kept. While, however, we mourn the loss, there was also an equivalent gain. The poetry of the past drew its elements only from war, Nature-myths and ancestral heroism. The new poetry or the new poetic feeling drew its elements from the whole of human life, entered into all the outgoings of the human heart, found its subjects in the common doings of daily life. Christianity made all the life of every man and woman interesting and impassioned from the cradle to the grave. No one can read the *Ecclesiastical History* of Baeda without seeing the truth of this statement. The book, in all its stories, is steeped in poetic feeling. Religion, with its ideals, laid its hands of awe or of love on men from the king to the slave, and on all their relations one to another. It made a country of which all were citizens by right; it made a society which knit together all classes into a union in which the various kingdoms of England dissolved their differences and their wars. It brought together all men in one relation; it filled those doings of life which were common to all with one spirit. In this fashion it expanded the whole world of feeling, and though I cannot say that all these new elements were actually worked out in Anglo-Saxon literature, yet the new acre of poetic work was ploughed and sown, and the seed was afterwards to grow into a great harvest.

The Cross was, at first, set up in every village, on every noble's estate. At its foot the missionary stood — the preacher from the Bishop's house or from the monastery — and said mass and baptized and married and recited prayers for the dead. Later on, when Theodore had established a priest in every township or bundle of townships,[1] each of these had its

[1] See Stubbs' *Constit. Hist.* vol. i. p. 227.

Church, and around it clustered all the main interests and emotions of humanity. The dead were no longer burned, but laid together in the acre of God. The wife and the husband began their mutual life within the walls of the Church; the children were baptized inside its porch. The people maintained it by their offerings, the affairs of the township were discussed and ordered in its yard, at least wherever the Church occupied the place where the folk-moot had been held. Thus that association of religion with all that was peaceful, with all the beloved emotions of common human life, began, which has formed one of the great motives of poetry. Peace and its powers were made poetical. We have seen how Cynewulf was not ashamed to sing of all the doings of the farm, of the merchant's life upon the sea, of the green grass and the singing birds. Other subjects were also disclosed. The solitary life of the hermit, the victory of the martyr over earthly force, the triumph over temptation, the abjuring of revenge, the sacrifice of this world for the world to come, the conquest won by faith and not by arms, the little children who died for Jesus, the virgin life, the surrender of wealth and fame for the sake of civilising men — all these were a new world; and it was the larger humanity in Christianity which opened it to those who sang, and to those who listened to and loved the singing. The range of poetry was indefinitely extended.

Other figures also than those of men now passed over the scene, and they were not only great queens or stormy-hearted women, but lowlier and gentler creatures of the imagination. Woman took an equal place with man in poetry, and the attributes which ennobled her were changed, at least were modified. The sweet and tender grace, the humility and loving-kindness of the Virgin, her maidenhood, her motherhood, became the most vivid and beautiful image that filled the minds of men after the image of Christ. More than half of the beginning of Cynewulf's *Christ* is dedicated to her exalting. The saintly women who in the days of martyrdom kept their chastity against the tyranny of men and the threats of the Demon, like Juliana whom Cynewulf sang, passed, like the ancient goddesses who brought peace and protection to the faithful wife and the good spinner, from land to land and became dear to every household. When the shepherd, Eoves, in Bishop Ecgwine's legend, told that he saw in a forest glade fair women singing a magic song and thought them, perhaps, heathen haunters of the forest land, the Bishop saw in them a vision of the Virgin Mother and angels, and in the spot where they

had sung rose the Abbey of Evesham. It was no longer Choosers of the slaughter or Elf-women that rode in the air and shot deadly spears; but figures of excelling beauty, clothed in light, singing softly, took their place — the Angels of God, whom Caedmon exalts and Cynewulf is unwearied in praising, who brighten the pages of Baeda from legend to legend, whose songs are not of war but of spiritual peace, and who receive the warriors of Christ into the heavenly Hall and to the heavenly banquet. The relations of women to men, which we have seen honoured in *Beowulf*, and which played so large a part in English policy and war while England was yet heathen, received a fresh dignity in Christianity; and this new source of emotion produced many a poetic story. It increased the material of literature. The double monasteries which afterwards became the cause of scandal, were, while they kept their first purity, the cause of tender and beautiful friendships between grave men and holy women. The relations of Hild and Aidan, of Cuthbert and Ælfleda, of Cuthbert and Verca, of Ealdhelm and the virgins whose praise he wrote and to whom his letters are so gay, of Boniface and the nuns who wrote to him so lovingly, were charming, full of grace and poetry, though when the men were not Cuthbert and Aidan similar relationships soon degenerated. The great Abbesses were great folk in Northumbria. Heiu, who founded Hartlepool, was noble, so was Verca of Tynemouth. Hild, whom we know, and Ebba, whose monastery at Coldingham, seated on its lofty cape, rivalled its sister of Whitby; Ætheldreda who, amidst the rushy fens, founded Ely on its emerald isle; Ælfleda, as patriotic as religious, who finally brought peace to Wilfrid,[1] — were all princesses, powers in the state, with whom kings and bishops had to count, whose advice was taken in great movements, and whose lives, and all the legends which the emotion of the people for noble womanhood collected round them, became for centuries the material for ballad and song; but more especially for that silent literature which is, as it were, the background of the literature which is written — the popular emotion, the feelings of the mother and father and child in hamlet and town, the memories and prayers in times of distress and joy, which come together, like doves to their

[1] There were many other of these royal and noble abbesses in Mercia and Wessex, as well as in Northumbria, and those who would like to read their legends, and to judge of the far-spread influence these had on the imaginative material of literature, will find an enthusiastic account of them, written with a strong monastic bias, in the fifth volume of Montalembert's *Monks of the West*.

dwelling, to the names of the women who have consoled or exalted the world.

These are the main lines of the changes wrought by Christianity in that inner life of imagination and sentiment which collected round the gods and their worship. Other changes which we may allot to the realm of history, rather than to that of literature, will be found in other books. I turn now to changes of another kind, to those which belong to that grave and moral view of life which was as steady in the English character in the days before, as in the days after Christianity. There is a picture of this temper of mind in Baeda as well as of the more worldly and gayer temper which in contrast it often creates — even in the same person, a point continually made in *Hamlet* — and the picture belongs to the heathen time and heathen men. This picture is well known, but, even if I did not need it as an illustration of literary matters, it is in itself worth quoting as a piece of noble literature, done with simplicity of touch and delicacy of outline. Each character stands clear, and indeed there were men alive when Baeda wrote it who had seen Paullinus and Eadwine; and were, likely enough, at the meeting he describes.

When, then, we read this story of the year 627, we look, almost with the eyes of one present in the hall, into the judicial thoughtfulness and dignified seriousness of our heathen fathers. In the long-continued consideration Eadwine gave to the question of a change of religion we have that very temper which, in our poets, prevented English verse from being overwhelmed by the *esprit gaulois*. When we listen to the speech of the ealdorman, we have in it one of the motives of that graver poetry which, amid war-lays and stories, existed among the English before Christianity. On the other hand, the scene contains some new elements which were soon to influence English literature. When we look on the aspect of Paullinus and listen to his solemn question to the king, the religious awe which accompanied Rome, the dignity of her great age and yet her undiminished power, the emotion which grew solemn and enthusiastic round the Church as the Voice of God on earth, are placed before us; and we are compelled to estimate the immense force these new feelings were destined to have in literature. The very aspect of Paullinus is representative of the keenness and power of the intellect of Rome. A personal description, taken by Baeda from the lips of one who had seen him face to face, brings the Latin monk before us. He was "tall of stature, stooping, however, a little. His hair was

black, his eyes vivid, his face thin, his nose slender and aquiline, and his air majestic and venerable." It was he who had initiated the scene we are about to describe; for one day he entered the room where Eadwine sat alone, seriously pondering what religion he was to follow, as was his custom for hours together — and, laying his hand on the head of the king, asked him if he knew that sign. Then Eadwine, remembering a vision which had come to him (*Eccles. Hist.* bk. ii. ch. xii.), trembled, and said he would confer with his friends and redesmen. Whereat he called them together in his hall with the doors open east and west. To complete the scenery of the event, we must remember that it takes place in the country, in some rural seat of the king, near a knoll where stood a sacred grove enclosed with a low hedge, and in the shady centre of which was the tree round or near which the wattled Temple was built, and on which was fastened the symbol of the gods to whom the place was dedicated.

Near this grove, in the spring-time, the *witenagemôt* was held by Eadwine which made Northumbria Christian, and two well-marked types of Englishmen are vividly drawn for us in the narrative. The first is that of the grave and experienced Thegn — like the old warrior in Hrothgar's hall who remembered the many questions he had asked in life, — and his speech is entirely contradictory of the traditional notion of a heathen Englishman. "The present life of man," he said, "seems to me, O king, when we put it side by side in thought with the life which is unknown to us, like the quick flight of a sparrow through the hall when you sit at supper in the winter-tide, with your Aldermen and Thegns, when a good fire is burning in the midst upon the hearth, but without are the storms of rain and snow. Then the sparrow, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, is safe from the wintry tempest as long as he is within; but after this short tide of pleasant weather he vanishes out of your sight into the dark winter whence he had come. So is it with the life of man. It is seen only for a moment, but of what went before it and of what cometh after it we know nothing at all. If, therefore, this new teaching tells us anything more sure concerning it, it seems to be right to follow its law." No Roman or Greek of the dignified time could have expressed himself better or with a milder wisdom, and Baeda thinks it was by a divine inspiration that he and the others spoke on this matter.

This king then who sits wrapt up in musing for hours together at a crisis — as much political as religious in the history

of his people — this grave assembly of warriors, considering and speaking with poetic and anxious thought concerning the change of their religion — are heathens of the seventh century — and bear no resemblance whatever to the conventional portrait of the English chieftain and his folk that some historians are so fond of painting.

As interesting, and just as modern as the Ealdorman, is the character of the priest Coifi — a type of man who was sure to have made in hall many bold songs. Baeda's sketch of him is itself a piece of English literature. Coifi is the chief of the king's priests. He is the sceptic who has always had his doubts about the gods, who, if he serve them well, demands return from them like Jacob; who has no fear of them and counts his own individuality, like many a Norseman, to be as strong as any god. A rough gay humour, which we scarcely ever find among the English Christians, a sturdy eye, also like Jacob, to the main chance, belong to his character. He also is a clear-hewn type; but he, too, is a gentleman. He is asked, first of all, what he thinks of changing the religion of the kingdom. "O king," he answers, "the religion we have had up to this time has no virtue in it. Not one of your folk has been more diligent than I in the worship of our gods, and yet there are many who receive greater favours from you, and are better off than I. Now, if the gods were good for anything, they would rather forward me who have been so careful to serve them. It remains, therefore, if the new doctrine be likely to do more for us, that we immediately take it up."

Then, after listening to the old warrior's speech about life, he changes from this tone, which is that of the humorous man of the world, to a graver one. "I should like," he says, "to hear Paullinus;" and when he had heard him, he said, "I have long thought that all we worshipped was naught, for the more I sought for truth in that religion the less I found of it. But in this preaching I find the gift of life and happiness for ever. So my counsel is that we burn down those temples and altars which we hallowed of old, but out of which we have got no good." And when this bold speech was accepted, he declared that he himself would profane the temple, and seizing a spear and sword, and mounting a stallion — things unlawful for a priest to do — he rode straight to the sacred grove, and, casting his spear into the temple till it stuck in the opposite wall, commanded it to be burned with fire.[1] In place of the temple

[1] O nimium tanti felix audacia facti,
Polluit ante alios, quas ipse sacraverat, aras.
Alcuin, v. 186, *De Pont. Ebor.*

grew up, as usual, the Christian Church — the church of Godmundingham — and tradition said that in it was preserved the font in which Paullinus baptized Coifi.

The story illustrates the meeting of two faiths and the meeting of two literatures. It is plain that men like the king, the ealdorman and Coifi, would hold it their duty to propagate the new faith by the spreading of its hymns, but would not neglect their own ancient songs when they dealt with heroes, not with gods. The war-song then would last, but the worship-song would perish. Bishop and priest would not interfere with the first, but would passionately expunge the second. They would be helped by the remarkable, almost unique enthusiasm which, as we see from many a story in Baeda, the English kings and nobles showed for Christianity; and the result is that in no literature are the heathen gods so completely cleaned out as they are in Old English literature. But the other type — the heroic tales — continued. Ealdhelm may have sung them on the bridge, Ælfred had perhaps a book of them, and the story goes that his mother sang them. Part died, part survived, and when Christianity was securely established in England, an effort was made, I believe, in Northumbria, to recover a great deal of what had been lost. While the victory of the new over the old is still doubtful, the old is hunted down; but when the kingdom of the new is firmly fixed, then the new rediscovers what was excellent in the old and often falls in love with it. I should not be surprised if that was the case in Northumbria in the eighth century, and that we owe to it the preservation of the heroic lays contained in *Beowulf*.

Now I use this scene, full as it is of the grave and serious temper of which I speak, to introduce and illustrate what I have now to say concerning the elements which, making that temper, appear in English literature, and of the change wrought in them by Christianity.

There was first the belief in the Wyrd — the goddess who presided over the fates of men, and who, as Englishmen thought, was mostly against them, so that their life was a heavy-weighted battle, and sorrow and weariness its chief companions. The Gallic lightness, the Italian contentment, were unattainable in the "welter of care" in which they lived. Wyrd was hard upon them, but her work nourished a steady fortitude in which they found a grim contentment. When England became Christian, this deep-rooted faith, though changed in form, continued. The very name of the goddess

was kept. But God was now put above destiny. "The Wyrds change not God," says the *Gnomic Verses*. But for the most part Wyrd passed into God and was used to express the Deity. "The Wyrd is stronger, the Lord mightier, than any man's thought," is a phrase used in the *Seafarer*, and it might be matched in many of the Anglo-Saxon poems. Then the contest with the ills which Wyrd allots to man, in the noble doing and enduring of which honour was won, changes also its aspect. We have seen the spirit which met the Wyrd in *Beowulf*.

So shall each of us, every-one abide the end
Of the worldly life; let him win who may
Honour ere he die! To the helmed warriors,
When their days are done, dearest afterwards is that.
Beowulf, l. 1386.

A different note fills a parallel passage in the *Seafarer* —

So to every earl this the laud from after speakers,
This the laud from all the living, this the best of last words —
"That he worked and wrought, ere he went his way
On this earth with bold endeavour 'gainst the onset of the fiends
With his deeds of daring, right down upon the devil."
So his laud shall ever live among the angels. *Seafarer*, l. 72.

The sadness, then, of destiny still remains, but it is now met by the noble consolation of eternal holiness and peace in the world to come; and the temper of the best men and women, as represented in early English poetry, is that of Eadwine and the Ealdorman, careful, sorrowful, of quiet thoughtfulness, but no longer grim. It is now mingled with faith and with a certain triumph of joy.

Again, among the old sorrows which continued in Christianity to brood over the English mind, none was deeper than the passing away of the splendour and mirth and fame of men. The note which we hear in the Prince's lay in *Beowulf* is repeated over and over again. It fills the *Rime Song* in later times; it is the subject of the *Wanderer;* it is imported into the *Seafarer;* it is the subject of many moral verses; it is the frequent wail of Cynewulf in the personal passages in his poems. Even Ælfred, full of work as he was, stays his practical advice to make this cry. But it is deepest in the North. It has intensity in the poems of the *Seafarer*, the *Wanderer*. In the later poems of Cynewulf, its greater intensity is due, I conjecture, to their being written during the decay or the anarchy of Northumbria. At both periods men looked back on a time of splendour and peace from a time of disorder and destruc-

tion. Moreover, these passages are almost always put in the mouth of one who either suffers or has suffered exile; and the personal sorrows of a man who has lost his home and his country deepen the general regret.[1]

Mingled with this sorrow there was the common regret for the loss of youth, for the death of old companions, and for the solitude of an old man's life. The *Wanderer*, in a poem which is almost altogether heathen, thinks that he sees the troops of his ancient friends coming to meet him, and he welcomes them with joy; but they are but phantoms and they fleet away, and sorrow is renewed.

Then his mood goes moving on through remembrance of his kinsmen,
Greets them with glee-staves — gazes on them eagerly;
These societies of souls swim away again. l. 51.

All these heathen elements of grave sorrow were now changed or modified by the Christian hopes. Cynewulf, for example, feels, as he mourns for a ruined world, the same comfort which a Christian hand has added to the poem of the *Wanderer*. Crying to the Cross for help, he says with all the pathos of Vaughan and with much of his spirit, that few were the friends he had left on earth; that all the rest had gone from the joy of the world to live with the High Father in his dwelling; but he waited the call from this fleeting life to unite himself to their pleasure.

It was this consolation which changed the whole tone with which the English, in their grave and serious hours, spoke of life, of its fates and sorrows, and it developed round it a new region of literature. Midst all the passing of the world, the changes and turbulence of war and fortune, one thing was steady. "Well is it for him," says the later epilogue to the *Wanderer*, "who seeks for the Father's grace, for comfort with the Father in Heaven, where the Fortress for us all stands sure." Nor was this the conclusion only of the monk. Baeda gives instance after instance of kings and nobles, weary of wars and change and policy, entering the monastic life to prepare for the better light. The legend of Ine and his queen does not stand alone, and it has enough truth in it to prove how deeply this new sense of the eternal strength and splendour of the world to come, in contrast with the passing of this world, had settled into the English mind. In that high land also were

[1] It is remarkable that the Caedmonic poems are wholly free from this wailing note. Those portions of them, if any, which belong to the seventh century were written in a time of national pride; those of them which were written afterwards are supposed to belong to the time when Ælfred had won his day.

now dwelling all whom in life they had loved and whom they longed to rejoin. The tie between monk and monk, between anchorite and anchorite, between those who were soldiers in the service of Christ, had all the closeness and honour of the ancient bond of war-comradeship, and withal a deeper friendship. A passionate eternity was in it, and the dying looked to be received by those who had entered before them into the other life. Cuthbert, living in his rocky nest at Farne, alone amid the wild sea, thought every day of Herbert his friend, who in equal solitude lived on his isle in Derwentwater; and Herbert, who loved him as disciple loved his master, prayed always that he might die on the same day as Cuthbert. Every year they met for one day, and the last time, at Carlisle, Herbert asked that his constant prayer should be granted; and the gracious legend, which Wordsworth has touched, records that the friends passed away together. When Ceadda died in 672 the natural piety of the time made his brother Cedda descend from heaven to meet and welcome him. "I know a man," said Ecgberht (who had been in Ireland with Ceadda), "who is still in the flesh, and who, when that bishop died, saw the spirit of his brother Cedda descending from heaven with a company of angels, and they took his soul with them and returned back again to heaven," and Baeda, who tells the tale (Book iv. 3), moved by the sweetness of the thing, believes its truth. When Guthlac is dying, as Cynewulf writes, he tells his disciple, "for the sake of the fellowship that they of old had proved together, and lest he should after his death be over-sorrowful," — the great secret of his life — his converse at morn and even with a "glorious angel"; and bids him seek his sister, most beloved, and call on her to come and deck his body with earth. "I saw her not," he says, "in life, not for lack of love but for greatness of love — that we might see one another in eternal joy when our love should be faithful for ever."

These were new feelings to the English, and I do not think that any one could have predicted that their tenderness and grace were latent in the nature of our warlike forefathers. It is a wholly unexpected vein of feeling, added on to and modifying the serious sorrow of their fatalism. Yet it is one of the foundations of our literature. It is the ground tone of a class of religious poetry which never quite failed in England, and which has continued with its gentle, half joyful, half sorrowing sentiment to the present day. Now and then it was traversed — so modern is early England — by troubled ques-

tioning. "Mirk and mysterious is that other world. No one returns from it to tell us of its secret;" and the greedy way in which the dreams of monks and laymen were seized on to prove what was to be found beyond the earth is but the vulgar form of the metaphysical doubt and trouble concerning that undiscovered country which Cynewulf felt, and of which Hamlet is the type in literature.

The sorrows of which I have spoken were common to heathen and Christian times, but there was one sorrow which was entirely new, and which created a new world of poetry. It was the sorrow for sin, for a violent, sensual, or wasted life. There is a well-known passage of Cynewulf's in which he laments his past, and which is the first utterance of that poetry of the regretful soul so much of which belongs to England, and in which so many poets have represented their inmost personality with a vividness which has endeared them to our imagination. It is not so much the religion of it for which we care, nor in which lies the poetry. It is the personal cry which has been wrung out of them by their religion. The source of human love lies deep in our nature. But the source of this religious passion lies deeper still, more profound than any plummet sounds; and when we hear its voice, we hear that which lies at the very bottom of the abyss of personality. Here is the cry of Cynewulf, and it is repeated in three or four different places of his poetry with varying intensity. This, which is the least poetical, is from the end of the *Juliana*, and I translate it loosely; the others I leave aside for a time, because they belong more distinctly to his biography. The single letters (they are runes in the original) are the letters of his name, and it was his habit thus to riddle on his name.

> Much need have I that this holy One should help me . . . when out of my body my soul fares on its journey, I know not whither, to that undiscovered shore. Mourning wander then C. Y. and N. Stern is then the King, the Victory Giver; and flecked with sins E. W. and U. await, with anguish filled, the doom He shall allot to them according to their deeds. L. and F. tremble; troubled with cares they linger on. I think of all the sorrow, all the wounds of sin that I in earlier and later life have wrought within the world. Crying "Woe, woe," I shall bewail it all with tears. Far, far too late it was ere I shamed me of my evil deeds. . . . Therefore I pray of every man, whoso may sing this song, that he may earnestly bear my very name in mind, and ask of God that the Helm of heaven bring me help, the King of Mights, on that great day; the Father, the Spirit of all comfort, in that awful tide.

When this personal voice is not heard in the religious poetry, that poetry is extraordinarily dull, and the imagina-

tion, if the pangs of hell are the subject, is paralysed. Whenever that menacing subject arises, it chokes the literary faculty, except the writer be one of those imperial creatures, like Milton or Dante, who are able to make human passion greater than human pain.[1] Even Baeda, when he relates, and with some gusto, the dreams of those who had visited hell, seems to me to lose his style.

But it was different when triumph over sin and the lovely world of heaven were described; and as the sorrow for sin made a new world of poetry, so also did the rapture that followed the conviction of redemption. Most of the images and legends used to express this were common to Christendom. But the English, like the Saxon writer of the *Heliand*, made this triumphant joy national; first, by using concerning it phrases and thoughts borrowed from their heathen customs; and secondly, by filling it with a distinctive English rapture, as distinctive as the English melancholy. And it became all the more distinctive since it was expressed by Englishmen in their native tongue. Elsewhere, being only expressed in Latin, it had always, whatever the nation, a Roman note, a classic twang. Elsewhere also this triumph and heavenly joy were sung by monks, but the best of the poems of this class were written in England by Cynewulf, who, as I think, never became a monk.

The triumph over sin was poetically concentrated into the victory of Christ over Satan, and we shall meet hereafter many examples of the delight and excitement with which the poets celebrated it, and of the high and exultant Saga-form which they gave to it.[2] I content myself here with one passage from the *Christ* in which Cynewulf concentrates the victoriousness of Jesus, and which illustrates the early mediæval love of symbolism. I presume, but I do not know, that the six leaps of Christ were a common homiletic explanation of a phrase in the *Song of Solomon*.[3] But the exultation of the poetry, the applause of the Victor, appear in every line. He quotes the text in this fashion —

715. Known shall this become that the King of angels,
He of mights the very master, on the mount shall spring,

[1] Ed ei s'ergea col petto e colla fronte,
Come avesse lo inferno in gran dispitto. — *Inf.* x.

So it was with Farinata, *quell' altro magnanimo;* and so it is throughout the hell of Milton.

[2] See the *Temptation* in the *Christ and Satan*, the *Descent into Hell*, the *Christ*, the *Dream of the Rood*.

[3] "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." — Canticles ii. 8.

O'er the lofty dunes shall leap!
Girdles He with glory of Him;
Unto all the earth-indwellers,
Lo, the hills and knolls
gives redemption to the world,
through that leap exceeding praise.

The first leap was when he entered the spotless Virgin and took the form of man. The second leap "was his birth when in the bin he lay, of all majesties the majesty." The third leap was the mounting of the Rood. The fourth was into the rocky grave, when he left the tree for the earth-house. The fifth was when he bowed the multitude of the dwellers in Hell, and in quick torment bound their king. The sixth leap was the Holy One's enraptured play when he stept up into Heaven, to his ancient home, to his house of glittering light; and the angel bands were blithe with laughter and with joy upon that holy tide. The glory of this Conquest, which became the dowry of all sinners who, like Cynewulf, repented and loved the Lord, was as consistent an element in Anglo-Saxon poetry as the personal sorrow for sin.

Prayer and Praise became then two of the vital elements of Early English literature. The piteousness of prayer does not produce fine poetry except when it is exceedingly personal. But praise can create poetry of a high quality. The very first upwelling of English song, after Christianity had come, the dream-beginning of our poetry, was an outburst of praise, and the same note is sounded again and again in the Caedmonic poems. As to Cynewulf, he excels in rushing praise, and the adjective is not too strong to use for many of the passages in the *Christ*. Ea, la! he begins the soaring laudations with that double interjection, the sound of which lured his poetic ear. It was like the shout of praise with which he could fancy the warriors of the Lord went into battle. Indeed, this trumpet voice of the heart belongs to the English nature, and the lofty music of Milton's praise came down to him in legitimate descent from the earliest exultation of English psalm.

Their loud, uplifted, angel trumpets blow

is a line which might have been written by Cynewulf. It was first God as Creator whom they praised; then, as I have said, the victory of Jesus Christ; but with the tendency of the Northern poets towards Nature, they often turned to praise the creation of God and its beauty, and one of the favourite forms of this was in the shape of a riddle. Ealdhelm, following his original, had made a long riddle in Latin — *De Creatura*. This Cynewulf translates with his usual freedom and

imagination.[1] But, weary with a succession of phrases which did not hit the point, and like a poet sick for finer form, he flings all the force of his thought into another riddle, and concentrates into its ten original lines the meaning of the one hundred and seven lines of his imitation of Ealdhelm. It is a noble piece of praise. The *Creation* is supposed to speak —

Than this Garth of Earth I am greater far,
Than the hand-worm am I less, more wide-flashing than the moon,
Than the sun I'm swifter! All the sea-floods are
Folded in my arms, and the fields so green,
And the breast of earth! Down to the abyss I cling;
Under Hell I bow myself; and the Heavens I overtop,—
Glory's Fatherland! Far and wide I reach
O'er the Angels' own estate; and the Earth I fill,
And the ancient Mid-Garth, and the ocean streams,
Spacious, with my Self. Say what I am called. Rid. lxvii.

This is the universal grasp of the poet, and we may compare with it lines written some thousand years later to express the same conception —

A motion and a spirit which impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

But there was another poetic element introduced into the North by Christianity which had far-reaching effects, and in Northern England (helped as it was there by the instinct of the Celtic blood for natural beauty) it stimulated a love of fair scenery, and especially of quiet, gentle, summer-tempered scenery. I have spoken of the desperate weather the Northern Englishman endured, and how, when the Viking temper lessened, he suffered from it and expressed his sufferings. He had no escape from it in heathendom. He looked forward, if he looked forward at all, to a world of deeper gloom, of darker weather, than he endured on earth. The realm of Hel, the death-goddess, was a world of sunless mists. The pain and weariness of the fierce climate he bore upon earth was expressed in his poetry; it was expressed in a sadder fashion when Christianity added to his hatred of it a more sentimental

[1] I give one instance. Ealdhelm has one line concerning the Whale —

Grandior in glaucis quam ballena fluctibus atra.

Cynewulf touches this with fire —

I am stronger, I am greater than the mighty whale,
Who upon the ground abyss of the grisly ocean
Looks with his black eye.

way of looking upon life; and this cry against the wintry world and the suffering it brought, became one of the poetic elements, as it is now, of English feeling. But it had naturally another side. The pain created the desire to be free from it; the evil climate caused men to picture the fairer world. The Mignon feeling — that of the southern child lost in the bitter north — who sings her own longing for the shores where

Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht, —

that she may wake the same longing, and with it, love, in the heart of him she loves — arose among the English, but with a religious note in it, immediately after the introduction of Christianity.

This desire, stirred by the iron climate of the North, for the soft wind and blue sky and warm sunlight, has also been a fruitful source of English poetry. It appears first, but scantily, as a pleasant delight in green grass and sunny streams and flowers — a delight the origin of which we need not seek in Christianity, for we may find it in the old Northern joy in the coming of summer. But there is a contemplative quiet of pleasure, a note of differentiated tenderness in the following passage of Caedmon which separates his poetic pleasure from the mere exultation of heathendom in the coming of summer, and which is much more marked in the Anglo-Saxon than it can be in any translation. The words are soft, and softly linked together. He is describing Paradise —

Winsomely the running water, all wellsprings that be,
Washed the happy lands; nor as yet the welkin
Bore above the roomy ground all the rains that are
Wan-gloomed with the gale; yet with growing blooms
Was the Earth made fair. *Genesis*, l. 210.

Again, in the *Song of the Three Children*, the original text is expanded to describe the pleasure the translator had in the waters that fell from the pure rock —

Lord Eternal, all the river springs,
Laud Thee high exalted! Often lettest Thou
Fall the pleasant waters, for rejoicing of the world,
Lucid from the hill-cliffs clean. *Azarias*, l. 134.

Nor did Cynewulf think less of streams than the writers of the Caedmon poems. The Phœnix finds its happiness "in the bubbling streams that run through the woods," in the "fountains that well upwards in the glades through the soft sward."

This love of the gentler aspect of Nature, though nurtured by Christianity or by the temper of mind that Christianity created, does not seem in England to have wholly arisen in monasticism. The Irish preferred to establish their monasteries in the savage lands, or built them near the lonely caves or huts which the anchorite hollowed for his retreat in the most desolate places he could discover. Columba sought, when he reached Scotland, a lonelier and yet lonelier isle. He handed on this feeling for savage places to the English of Northumbria. Nothing could well be more wild than the height of Whitby or the rocks of Lindisfarne. Cedda chose to place the monastery where he died "among craggy and far-off mountains, retreats as of robbers and wild beasts." It is then in spite of this Celtic severity that we find the love of quiet and gentle nature among the English. Baeda's history has a few touches which suggest and confirm this statement. The traveller who, passing over the battlefield at Maserfeld, observed one spot greener and more beautiful than any other, and justly concluded that this arose from some person of unusual holiness being buried there, was one who had a wise and seeing eye. There Oswald's blood was shed, and the gentleness of his dying cry was well symbolised by the softer, greener grass. This is but a slight touch, and perhaps to use it in this fashion is to overstrain the passage, but there are enough phrases in Anglo-Saxon poetry to prove what I say. "Serene," cries Cynewulf, describing the view from the hill where Guthlac lived in hermitage, and forgetting the desolation of the lonely island, "was the glorious plain, fresh his dwelling-place, sweet the song of birds, blossoming the earth, and the cuckoos announced the year. In guard of God stood the green plain, for God loved all that He had shaped under the Heaven." "All the birds," for Guthlac was, like Francis, tender to the fowl, "rejoiced in the food he gave them," flitting to his hand for refuge, singing praises to him in their song; and when he dies, Cynewulf can find no better image of the sweet odours that came from his mouth than this: "Such fragrance as in summer's tide blossoming plants, honey-flowing and rejoicing, send forth over the wide plains." The fragrance of the woods was one of the common pleasures of the English poets. The perfume of the panther's breath — the panther is here the symbol of Christ — "is sweeter and stronger than the blooms of plants, and than the flowers of the trees."

The same delight in the tenderer offices of Nature is seen in the translation of the passage in the *Song of the Three Children,*

where the coming of the angel of the Lord into the oven is thus translated in our version: "He smote the flame of the fire out of the oven, and made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind." The Anglo-Saxon poet turns it thus—

> Then 'twas in the oven when the angel came
> Windy cool and winsome, to the weather likest
> When is sent to earth in the summer tide,
> Dropping down of dew-rain at the dawn of day.
>
> *Azarias*, l. 61.

In the *Daniel* the same passage is translated, but another aspect of Nature is added to it. The angel's coming makes the fire like a "warm shower from the clouds." But this is not all. The original comparison charmed the English poet, and he has inserted it elsewhere, but again he changes it, and makes it still more poetical. It was within the fire for them, as when—

> In the summer tide shining is the sun,
> And the elf-enchanted[1] dew, at the dawning of the day,
> Winnowed is by wind. *Daniel*, l. 276.

These are passages full of a mild savour of contemplative pleasure in Nature, such as we neither find in the heathen poems, nor in Icelandic verse. They have a quality of their own, like Jacques' melancholy, and they lead us on, like many other elements in Anglo-Saxon poetry, to the feeling of the nineteenth century, to the sentiment of Wordsworth and Tennyson.

As to the longing their fierce climate gave them for a warmer and brighter land, it appears most fully in the delight of the poets in the Christian conception of Paradise. Nowhere is this clearer than in the famous passage in the *Phœnix*. There Cynewulf, if it was he who wrote that poem, has let loose all his pleasure in soft air and lovely scenery. The thirty Latin lines on which he worked are cold in comparison with the eighty-four verses into which he expands them. It seems as if he could not stay his hand till he had wholly forgotten in his dream the icy seas and the fierce storms, the misery and might of which he has also told so well. The Elysian fields of Homer and Virgil, the Sicily of Theocritus, the Earthly Para-

[1] And deáw-drîas on daege weorðeð
Winde geondsâwen.

I was so pleased with "elf-enchanted dew," which is Dietrich's suggestion, that I put it into the translation; but *deáw-drîas* really means, I imagine, nothing more than "the dew-fall."

dise of Dante, the Eden of Milton, the lovely country where in Shelley's poem Asia and Prometheus wander, are not ill-paralleled by this English poem of the eighth century. Christianity created it in the English heart, and as such I give it in this chapter. But it is a parallel only in its enjoyment of its subject. Its poetry does not approach that of these masters of song. The man who wrote it sought by repetition, not by concentration, to express what he saw in his soul, and this is the weakness of all Art at its origins, as in its decay. This is the passage —

1. Far away from hence, I have heard it told —
Of all lands the noblest is, in the Eastern parts;
Known to folk by fame; yet that fold[1] of earth
Unto few of the folk-owners faring over Midgard,
Easy of access is; but is far withdrawn
From the men who mischief make by the might of God!
All the land is lovely; with delights made happy,
With the very sweetest of the scents of earth.
Onely[2] is that island, ætheling its maker,
Mighty and majestic, who its mould has set!
To its blest indwellers oft the door of heaven
10. There is clear disclosed, clear the joy of hymns!
Winsome is the wold[3] there; there the wealds are green,
Spacious spread below the skies; there may neither snow nor rain,
Nor the furious air of frost, nor the flare of fire,
Nor the headlong squall of hail, nor the hoar-frost's fall,
Nor the burning of the sun, nor the bitter cold,
Nor the weather over-warm, nor the winter shower,
Do their wrong to any wight — but the wold abides
Ever happy, healthful there. Honoured is that land,
All ablown with blossoms. Not abrupt the mountains:
Steep the hills stand not, and the stony cliffs
Are not high upheaved, such as here with us they are!
Nought there is of dells and dales, nor of deep rock-gorges,
Heights or hillocks rough; nor hangs over there
Any unsmooth thing, but the noble land
27. 'Neath the welkin waxes with its winsome joys ablown.

. . . . . .

33. Calm and fair this glorious field, flashes there the sunny grove;
Happy is the holt of trees, never withers fruitage there.
Bright are there the blossoms; and the (bearing trees
Stand forth ever green in it, as ordainèd God to them.

[1] *Sceat*, that which is folded over, as we say, a lap of the land.

[2] Sidney uses this word "onely" (*aenlic*), and I use the word *ætheling* here as an adjective — that is, *noble*.

[3] *Wong* is the word I have translated "Wold." "Wold" has nothing philologically to do with it, but it means much the same. Had not *wong* been too obscure to be introduced into modern English I would have used it, for it still exists in English dialects. In Lincolnshire it means a marsh, a lowland. Elsewhere it has its Anglo-Saxon meaning of a meadow, a plain, an open space.

In the winter, in the summer, is the wood alike
Hung with blossomed boughs. Never breaks away
Leaf below the lift, nor shall low of fire scathe them
Through the ages ever till the end shall be
For the world accomplished. . . .

. . . . . .

In that home the hating foe houses not at all,
Nought of vengeance nor of wailing, no woe-token ever.
Nor the narrow death, misery nor Eld,
Nor the loss of life, nor of loathly ill the coming;
Nought of strife or sin, nought of sorrow-soreness,
Nor the wretchlessness of want, nor of wealth the needing;
Neither sleep nor sadness, nor the sickman's weary bed,
Nor the winter-whirling snow, nor the wax and wane of tempests —
Roughly storming under skies — nor the savage frost,
With his chill cold icicles, crushes down the folk!
There no hail or hrime hurtleth down to earth;
Never vapours full of wind, nor rain-water falleth,
Lashed the lift about[1] — but the liquid streamlets,
Wonderfully beautiful, from their wells upspringing,
Softly lap the land with their lovely floods.
Winsome are the waters from the woodlands' middle
Which, at every moon, through the mossy turf of earth,
Surge up cold as sea-foam; seek their path around the trees
Gloriously, from time to time; — for 'tis God's behest
That the mirth of river floods, every month that goes,
All about the fame-fast land should o'erflow in play!
There with gladsome growths all the groves are hung,
With the (wildwood) blossoms. Never wither there,
Hallowed under heaven, of the holt the lovelinesses!
Never there the fallow foliage falls upon the earth,
Fairness it of forest trees; full of beauty are
Evermore the branches, bent adown upon the trees,
With a fruitage always fresh, fadeless day by day!
On the grassy plain, stands in green array
Brightest-gleaming of all groves, gloriously enclad,
Through the craft[2] of Holy God! Never change is there
In the beauty of the holt; there its holy fragrance
Wons above the winsome land; nor is waning known
Ever through the ages, till the end He brings
To the ancient work of old who erst its making had.

Phœnix, ll. 1–84.

The writer of these verses had lost his youthful unconsciousness in art, and, in endeavouring after his Latin original, was not himself quite free; yet his natural originality breaks through his convention. His work is scattered, but he has tried to give it some unity by the use of a refrain. It is also full of

[1] Or lashed by the air, by the wind.
[2] I use *craft* in all these translations with its old meaning of *power*.

repetition, but the repetition is but another instance of the pleasure with which the Northumbrian poet dwelt on that aspect of natural scenery and soft air which the Christian vision of Eden afforded him when the bitter weather froze his bones. Moreover, though the thoughts are repeated, the words used in the repetition are different; and different words, I have already said, for various phases of the same natural phenomenon are a proof that the people and the poet who use them are close and affectionate observers of Nature. I repeat the statement in connection with the subject of this chapter. The poetry of natural description, already slightly touched in *Beowulf*, was developed to a much greater fulness under the influence of Christianity. It is a very remarkable and uncommon thing that, at this early time, such a poetry should have existed at all; that the doings of Nature should have been made, by deliberate choice, a separate subject of song. This owes its origin, I think, partly to a special strain in the nature of the Northern English, the cause of which I cannot render definite; partly, I believe, to the reading of Virgil. It was, no doubt, strengthened by an admixture of Celtic blood. Whatever its origins, it is of extraordinary interest when we consider that in the European poetry of the last 150 years there has been no growth of the poetry of natural description so varied or so complete as that which arose into flower in Great Britain. In Germany that poetry was fairly wrought, but it was not, at the beginnings of this century, as full or of so great a range as ours, nor is it now. In France, that poetry has been, of late years, extensive, tender, and minute, but in the fulness of this we preceded France; and I may perhaps be allowed to trace our quicker seizure and more finished development of the subject to the fact that the root of the matter was in us more than a thousand years ago.

CHAPTER XII

MONASTICISM AND LITERATURE

The monastic life, so largely developed in England both by Celtic and Latin Christianity, increased the force of some of the literary elements on which I have dwelt in the last chapter, added others, and brought to the help and adornment of literature new arts, and new forms of human life. Moreover, it enlarged the material of literature by producing a literary class and by the collection into libraries of the literature of the past. It founded the literature of History, Rhetoric, and Philosophy. It established schools. Laymen attended them, and it actually created in this fashion, and for a time, a small literary class of laymen in Northumbria. By means of the unity, which, independent of diverse nationalities, knit together the monasteries, monasticism opened to Englishmen Rome, Ireland, and the Continent. New thoughts, new scenes, new views thus entered into the life of thought in England. The pilgrimages which it encouraged did the same kind of work; and the movement to and fro of the missionaries whom England sent out to the Teutonic lands brought her into contact again with the original spirit which informed her poetry, and strengthened that spirit. It is worth while to briefly develop these various points, and to bring them, however diverse they may be, into as united a form as possible.

First, those emotional habits of daily life, of custom and thought on which I have dwelt in the last chapter, and which form, as it were, the ground-ooze of poetic literature, grew into a special charm in English monastic life. There was added to them a religious tenderness, a fuller love of quiet beauty, an imaginative heavenliness, which our sacred poetry has never lost. That charm is seen most clearly in the writings of Baeda. It runs like a sweet clear stream through the stories he tells of holy men and women who, while yet alive, heard celestial sounds and saw their convent gardens, the woods and moors

and starry heavens irradiated by the "solemn troops and sweet societies" of the angels. A history of literature is bound to quote one of these tales,[1] itself a lovely illustration of the temper I am describing, and told with an ideal grace and innocent simplicity which arise out of Baeda's own delight in that of which he speaks.

When Ceadda, bishop of the Mercians, was near the hour of his death, it happened that a monk, whose name was Owini, was employed in the garden of the monastery at Lichfield, and became aware of a strange thing. The bishop was alone, reading or praying in his oratory, when on a sudden Owini "heard the voice of persons singing most sweetly and rejoicing, and the sound seemed to come down from heaven. And he heard the voice moving from the southeast, but afterwards it drew near to him, till, coming to the roof of the oratory where the bishop was, it entered therein and filled it. Owini listened, all attent, and after the space of half an hour the same song of joy ascended from the roof and returned to heaven with an inexpressible sweetness. While he stood astonished, turning seriously in his mind what this might be, the bishop opened the window of the oratory, and clapping with his hand as he was wont to do, bade him come in. 'Make haste to the church,' he said, 'and cause the seven brothers to come hither, and do you come with them.' When they were at hand he admonished them to keep the virtue of peace among themselves and towards all, and to be careful to practise the rules of regular discipline." . . . "And then he said, 'The time of my death is at hand, for that amiable guest who was wont to visit our brothers has vouchsafed also to come to me this day and to call me from the world. Return, therefore, to the church and speak to the brethren, that they recommend in their prayers my journey to the Lord; and be careful also (for the hour is uncertain) to provide for their own, by watching and prayer and good works.' When he had spoken thus much and more, and they, having received his blessing, had gone away in sorrow, he who had heard the heavenly song came back alone, and, kneeling on the ground, said, 'I beseech you, Father, that I may ask a question

[1] No history of poetic literature would be in any sense complete which did not draw special attention to the stories contained in the *Ecclesiastical History* and in the *Biographies* of Baeda. I have quoted one of them above, in order to ask those who care for fine literature to read them all. I wish they were collected separately. I think it would be an admirable thing if some Anglo-Saxon professor were to put them into Anglo-Saxon and make a little reading-book out of them; or were to isolate them in their original Latin, and give them to the Class to reproduce in the manner of the later Anglo-Saxon of the *Chronicle*.

of you.' — 'Ask what you will,' answered the bishop. Then he added, 'I entreat you to tell me what song of joy was that which I heard coming upon this oratory, and after some time returning to heaven?' The bishop answered, 'If you heard the singing, and know of the descent of the heavenly company, I command you, in the name of our Lord, that you tell it not to any before my death. These were angelic spirits who came to call me to my heavenly reward, for the which I have always longed; moreover, they promised to return seven days hence and take me with them.'"

This is but one of many tales, full of so heartfelt a harmony of feeling and style, that it is impossible to ignore them as one of the original sources of English religious poetry. This sweet and well-bred gentleness, this religious fervour, with its tender supernaturalism, its natural dignity, its grave seriousness of life, and its quietude in death, added new and special elements to the Sacred Song of England, which, continued up to the present day, is not excelled in the world for its variety and depth, for the passion of its sadness and joy.

The romantic tone added to it by the Celtic missionaries ministered still further to its endurance. Our island religion — at least in the home of poetry in the North — was first made by the Irish, and was deeply tinged by their nature. Owing to their influence, a more changing colour was given to the religious life, a greater spirit of adventure pervaded it, a freer and more passionate daily life entered into it. Moreover, the life the Irish missionaries led and the spirit they imposed on religion were alike romantic. These things have been one of the powers of our literature — one of the fires which have burnt in it down to the present day.

We can trace these romantic roots of poetry and the subjects of poetry in the lives of the evangelisers of Northumbria. They were the eager bringers into life of an imaginative, richly-coloured, natural music. They filled with poetry popular religious emotion. Aidan, with his gentleness and fire thrilled the land he converted. We may even claim the life of Columba as another influence in the same direction, for after his death his romantic soul touches from afar the hearts of English kings. Oswald, who had been in exile at Iona, felt all through his life the spirit of the founder of Iona. The legend runs that on the evening before the battle of Denisesburn, Columba (now dead for thirty-six years) appeared to him, and stretched his glittering robe over the little army, and cried, "Be of good courage and play the man. Join battle at

the dawn. I have won victory for you from God, and the death of the tyrants." But the ideal example of this influence is Cuthbert, and the best also to take, for he was not, like Aidan, a Scot, but an Englishman. His very birthplace is one of the homes of our romance, for he grew up on the Lammermoor, in the country of Tweed and Teviot, and kept the flocks of his master on the sheep walks of the Leader. He is bound up with Aidan, as Elisha was with Elijah; for as he was watching the sheep one night in the starry silence he saw Heaven opened, and a host of angels descend on a stream of light, and fly upwards again with a resplendent soul. And he knew afterwards, it is said, that this was Aidan who had just died at Lindisfarne. At fifteen years old, the story runs, he came to Melrose on his horse, like a young warrior, spear in hand, and with an attendant rider, and the picture is like a ballad. No life could be wilder, more impassioned than the missionary life he then undertook, roving from one lonely hamlet to another among the pathless fells, living in the open air from glen to glen, lighting the desolate country with "his angel face," preaching to English and Celts, redeeming them from the remnants of heathenism. For weeks, for months, he was away from the monastery, going from the Forth to the Solway, even piercing northward into the land of the Picts.[1]

Then the anchorite spirit seized him, and he prayed on the dark nights beside the icy waves, and the otters or seals came out of the water, moved with pity, to lie over and to warm his feet, a story which clung to the popular memory. All through his life he had pleasant doings with the animals, as many others had among the early English saints. Cuthbert, in this relation, is the St. Francis of England; and it is agreeable to think, and may have more in it than mere fancy, that the love of Walter Scott and Burns — lowlanders like Cuthbert — for the poetry of animal life had a far-off origin in Cuthbert's affectionate regard for birds and beasts — creatures who, he thought, served God, and ought to love God's minister. To the birds who wasted his barley on Farne he spoke, appealing to their honesty not to injure that which belonged to another; yet they might take the corn, he said, if God had given them

[1] The wandering missionary bearing the Gospel from land to land carries on into Christian times, and is in full analogy with the wandering Scôp bearing his sagas from hall to hall. The bishops, like Ealdhelm, who preached from village to village, brought to the people, by the stories and parables in their sermons, even by the old songs they did not disdain to sing or to make in English, something of what we may call literature. The sermon was often the successful rival of the War Tale.

leave. One day, hungry and in a waste place, an eagle killed a fish for him. His boy brought him the food. But Cuthbert reproved him. "What have you done, my son; why have you not given part to God's handmaid? Cut the fish in two pieces, and give her one, as her service well deserves." Two ravens that lived on the rocks of Farne pulled out the thatch of his hut to build therewith their nest. He reproved them, and they fled away in sorrow. At the end of three days one returned, and spread out his wings and bent his head most piteously, asking pardon by his gestures of Cuthbert who was digging in his field. And the man of God gave them leave to return, the which both of them did, and brought a large piece of hog's lard with them, with which Cuthbert always greased the brethren's shoes; and for many years in all humility, penitence, and peace, the ravens dwelt with him in Farne. As I write this, I think of the spirit which fills the *Ancient Mariner* of Coleridge.

But he was not as yet living in this lonely island. It was after years passed at Melrose, at Ripon, at Lindisfarne and in his frequent journeys, that, wearying for loneliness with God, he came at last to Farne, an island opposite Bamborough, ceaselessly swept by the winds and waves of the fierce sea. There he lived a happy, and, when he was visited, a hospitable life for nine years (676–684). Made bishop then of Lindisfarne, he carried, as before, his poetic spirit and the peace of God over the whole of his wild diocese in incessant journeys. When, worn out, he went back, after two years to die at Farne, his last breath was drawn in the midst of the quiet sea, and the bells of Lindisfarne answered the waving candles of Farne which told his brethren on the mainland that their master had departed (687). This was a romantic life, and it sank deep into the hearts of the English people. One beautiful story after another is told of his tender, passionate, daring, and childlike character. Women loved him well in all honour and noble friendship. His life has been called uneventful, but the spirit of it was more longlived than the memory of all the wars and policy of his time. Northumbria chose him for patron. Every valley and fell loved his memory. He gathered round his bones a host of the relics of noble Englishmen. The head of Oswald lay on his breast; the bones of the bishops Aidan, Eadberht, Eadfrith, Æthelwold, the head of the most glorious Ceolwulf, and the relics of Baeda, rested with him in his coffin. The kings of England paid him homage. He edged Ælfred's falchion on the Dane, and the Norman

Conqueror honoured him. The great rock of Durham, resting on the curved arm of the Wear, received his bones; the solemn cathedral rose, and the vast bishopric grew into its power under the protection of his name. The battle of the Standard was not unconnected with the insult offered to his lands. It was under his banner, "the holie corporax cloth" with which he covered the chalice, that David II. was beaten at Neville's Cross in 1346. It is said that Surrey carried the sacred talisman to Flodden, and that the Northern earls upraised it in the futile rising of 1569. That sad history drew the pen of Wordsworth, so that Cuthbert, not only in the eighth, but in the nineteenth century, not only in Baeda, but in Walter Scott and Wordsworth, has been the subject or inspirer of literature. Romance, intensity of character, variety of life, impulsive change, a deep humanity, the resolute consistent force of a man, the sentiment and tenderness of a woman, make up an image which has sent its influence throughout English literature from his day unto our own. In lives like this of Cuthbert — how different from the ordered, but no less useful, lives of the Roman missionaries, — lies one of the chief impulses of song in early times. Now the whole of Northern England, which became the special home of poetry, was subject, and far more than Mercia, to the quickening impulses of many men of this kind, of whom Cuthbert is the type. They took the place of the saga-heroes among the people, poetry collected round them, and in their legends took a Christian form. Their lives sent down the materials of poetry from century to century. It would be well if English literature looked far more than it has yet done to the primal rock from whence it was hewn.

On the other side from this wandering life was the retired and workful stillness of the monastic scholar; not the inspirer, but the producer of literature. His was the quiet cell with desk in the window, a single chair at the desk, with cupboard and bed, and a chest full of manuscripts, where the monk lived and worked year after year, looking up now and then to hear the bird sing on the sill, to see the flowers in the paved cloister, or the fruit-trees blossom in the garden — a simple, silent, happy life.

These cells were the nurseries of learned literature. Sometimes they were like that of Mailduf, an Irishman, who in the midst of the untilled forest set up a hermitage, and then a school, and then a monastery. Sometimes they were like that of Theodore or Hadrian, from which a sun of learning illuminated England; and we see, with the eyes of Ealdhelm,

Theodore, issuing from his cell, and walking to and fro in the shade of the cloister, with his Irish scholars, arguing like a wild boar surrounded by a snarling troop of Molossian dogs, whom he repulsed with his sharp grammatic tooth. Sometimes they were like that of Ealdhelm, Theodore's finest scholar, where Greek, Latin, and Hebrew were studied and expounded; where first the Latin muse was wooed by an Englishman; where English songs were made, whence he wrote letters to kings and chiefs and virgins on the joys of study. Sometimes, we see, as at Whitby, the poet in his chilly cell, ruminating the song he is to sing at night. At another time the cell is filled with plans for building, with musical scores, with illuminated manuscripts, such as were the daily care of Benedict of Wearmouth. Sometimes the little room holds one who writes a biography of some stirring man like Wilfrid, or records a merchant's tale of travel to the Holy Land. As we look at England, during the eighth century, there was scarcely any monastery which had not at least one literary man who was eager, not only for his spiritual work, but for some special line of literature or of art.

The writing also of history, or rather the collection of the materials for history now began, and in the monasteries. Most of the great foundations jotted down short annals of their growth and expansion, or any remarkable story which belonged to their history. What they did was not literature, but it was one of its infantine beginnings, and it rose rapidly into work like the *Ecclesiastical History* of Baeda. Then books began to be collected and libraries established. The kings and chieftains, the rich earls who joined or founded monasteries, carried into them as gifts the manuscripts they had received or purchased. The monk returning from pilgrimage brought back some treatise of a Roman bishop, some manuscript of a Latin father, some copy of a classic poet. The warrior who wished to gift the monastery which had baptized and educated him, the wandering merchant who wished its custom or its support, the visitor from Ireland or Gaul, brought with them, as their most precious offering, some book, which was received with joy, and cherished in the library. We know, through a letter of Alcuin's, the contents of the library at York, and it gives us a notion of what may have been in Jarrow, in Wearmouth, at Hexham or Canterbury. A long list is given of the Latin and Greek fathers, and among them were a few Hebrew manuscripts. Boethius, the supposed Lactantius, Orosius, were also there, and these names are of interest to us, for Ælfred translated Orosius and Boethius, and Cynewulf must have had Lactantius in his hands or

heard it translated to him. Among the ancients were Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil, Pliny, Statius, and Lucan. Donatus, Priscian, and other grammarians rested also in the chests of that famous library.

When we read Baeda's account of his own works, and know that he spent all his life at Wearmouth and Jarrow, we know also how large his library must have been. Indeed, the founding of that library illustrates the literary excitement of the monasteries of the seventh century. In 671 the Abbot Benedict, whose surname was Biscop, went for the third time to Rome, and passing by Vienne, bought in that ancient capital a number of books which he stored there till his return. On his way back from Rome, with a large cargo of manuscripts and relics, he took up the books he had left at Vienne, with others collected for him by friends, and returned in triumph to England. It was then that he built the monastery of St. Peter's, Wearmouth, in 674, and, moved by the passion of the collector, went a fourth time to Rome, and brought back books, images, relics, and pictures. After his return from this voyage in 679, he founded Jarrow in 682, and made a fifth journey to Rome in order to establish in Jarrow a library as large as that at Wearmouth. He loved his collection like a child, and his love was strong in death. One of his last recommendations to his monks was to keep it carefully, to take care it should not be either injured or dispersed. His influence did not close with his death. It is to his libraries that we owe Baeda, the School of York, Alcuin, and all the continental learning that flowed from the work of Alcuin.[1] His friend and successor, Ceolfrid, was as eager as he in collecting, and still further enriched the two libraries. A pleasant story proves that not only monks but kings were lovers of books in this century. There was a *cosmographorum codex* of marvellous workmanship in the library of Jarrow, and King Aldfrith was keenly desirous of possessing it. Ceolfrid sold it to the king for a land of eight families, and later on sold this land for a larger territory close to Jarrow. Baeda then, owing to the work of these two predecessors of his, had two large libraries at his command when he began to write.

Nor were the women in the monasteries without their books. Barking and Wimbourne were celebrated at the beginning of the eighth century for their literary, even their classic, studies. Ealdhelm, writing to the nuns of Barking, quotes to them Vir-

[1] See Bp. Stubbs' article on Benedict in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*.

gil and Ovid. It has been held that some of his phrases presuppose that a few of them knew Greek. The nuns who wrote to Boniface write in an impetuous, incorrect Latin. They send him books and receive them from him. They quote Virgil to him. They make Latin verse for him, "in order to exercise the little intellect that God has given them."

Thus, as Roman writing, replacing the runic characters, trebled the creation of literature, so also the collections of books refined and impelled it. For the books were not only manuals of devotion, but some of the masterpieces of the world. The delicate, pellucid style of Virgil, the finished rhetoric of Cicero were unattainable by the English monk, but they supplied him with a model and an inspiration. Nor were Greek books altogether absent. Plato seems to have been quoted by Ceolfrid in a letter to a Scot king, but I suppose Ceolfrid found the passage in some Latin writer. Aristotle was one of the books in the library at York. The story of Andrew and the Mermedonians, the foundation of the *Andreas*, only exists in Greek; and I try, remembering an allusion here and there, and that Theodore studied at Athens, to persuade myself that Theodore or Hadrian brought with them a manuscript of Homer. At least, some of the great models, which whosoever reads has seen the stars, wrought upon the literature of the seventh and eighth centuries.

Along with Roman literature came also through the monasteries the Roman arts; and the arts dance with, inspire, and are inspired by literature. The method of Roman singing taught by James the Deacon filled, we are told by Baeda, with its respondent chants the ancient church at York; and then spreading from Kent in the time of Theodore was soon taught in all the English churches. John, Abbot of St. Martin's at Rome, whom Benedict Biscop set up as teacher of singing at Wearmouth, not only taught the method of singing throughout the year as it was practised at St. Peter's in Rome, but also the reading aloud of the ritual, the writing down of all that was needful for the yearly celebration of all the festivals; and monks, from the greater number of the monasteries of the Northern province, flocked to hear him and to learn of him. Wilfrid, the story ran, so filled Richmondshire with the Latin music Eddi and Eona taught, that the very peasants mingled the Gregorian chants with their daily work. Bishop Acca, himself a "heavenly singer," who succeeded Wilfrid at Hexham in 709, having "diligently gathered a numerous and noble library together," invited Maban a celebrated singer from

Kent to the North, and kept him for twelve years by his side to teach such ecclesiastical songs as were unknown, and to restore others corrupted by neglect."[1]

Not only music but architecture, sculpture and painting ministered to literature and kindled it, and those forms of them which were brought from Rome soon drove out the ruder forms which had come from Ireland and Iona. "Churches of stone, *ex polito lapide*, in the Roman style" rose at Wearmouth, Hexham, Ripon and other places. Wilfrid brought with him from Gaul "builders and teachers of every art." It was he that covered the roof of the church at York with lead, glazed the windows, and whitewashed the walls. The basilica he built at Ripon astonished the Northumbrian world by the height of its porches and its polished stone columns,[2] and on the day of its dedication, standing before the altar, he laid upon it a cross of gold and a splendid Evangeliarium covered with plates of gold and precious stones, and written in letters of gold on purple parchment. Hexham, another foundation of Wilfrid's, was still more magnificent. Its deep and immense foundations, its crypt, its numerous aisles and stories, galleries and high-hung bells, made it for two centuries, till it was destroyed in 875 by the Danes, the finest church on this side of the Alps; extolled, Eddius declares, even by those who came from Rome. The Archbishops of Canterbury had set up a cathedral of stone on the plan of a Roman basilica. The great church of stone at Crowland, built on piles in the marshes of the hollow land of Lincolnshire, is said to have been set up by Æthelbald of Mercia in the eighth century, and it was only one out of many. Ealdhelm placed side by side with Mailduf's small church a great minster, one of the finest in England, which William of Malmesbury saw. At Frome also, and at Wareham, he built churches of stone. Architecture had advanced farther than we think. The common notion was that the parish churches of the seventh and eighth centuries were, like those Baeda describes as built by the Celtic monks, of wood and thatched with reeds. On the contrary, the Roman method was established by the end of the seventh century, the masonry of squared stone was good; carved figures adorned the buildings. They had nave, chancel, and north

[1] These things will be found in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Musical instruments, the horn, flute, harp, and trumpet — were used, and Ealdhelm describes in his *Praises of Virginity* the mighty organ, with its blasts and tones, its windy bellows, and golden pipes; and since this instrument came from the Greeks, it was probably introduced into England by Theodore.

[2] Its vault, called "St. Wilfrid's Needle," still remains.

porch. The style was primitive Romanesque, not Norman. At least, this is the case with St. Laurence at Bradford-by-Avon, which William of Malmesbury believed to be the genuine work of Ealdhelm, and whose continued existence to the present day enabled Mr. Freeman to make the assertions I have here derived from him concerning the architecture of the late seventh and eighth centuries. This little building, at Bradford, this *ecclesiola* (it is less than forty feet long), is as precious as a gem. "It is the one perfect surviving Old-English church in the land. The ground plan is absolutely untouched, and there are no mediæval insertions at all. So perfect a specimen of Primitive Romanesque is certainly unique in England, we should not be surprised if it is unique of its own kind in Europe."[1]

As to embroidery, it was developed to a high excellence in the female monasteries, not only for the sacred vestments both of altar and priest, but also by the womanly desire to make a show of gorgeous garments. Baeda thought the divine wrath would fall on the nuns of Coldingham, because "Texendis subtilioribus indumentis operam dant"; Boniface denounced this luxury; Ealdhelm warned his sisters against it; the council of Clovesho in 747 prescribed that the nuns should revert to the ancient and simple robes, and the monks give up the fashionable gartering of their legs.[2]

The art of glass-making, of glazing the windows of churches, the Roman and Gallican arts of gold embroidery and of gold work in lofty rood and chalice, pyx, missal, and crosier, were soon established in England, and added their fresh impulse to that ancient English art of gold web and golden smithery which, influenced by Celtic art as well as by Roman, nevertheless kept its own spirit and worked from its own invention. Gregory's Bible at St. Augustine's, Canterbury, had leaves inserted in it at the beginning, "some of a purple, others of a rose colour, which, held against the light, showed a wonderful reflection. There is also a Psalter, having on its exterior the

[1] See *English Towns*, E. A. Freeman, pp. 134, etc.

[2] This Synod discloses the other side of the monastic life. It was not all glittering gold. Pagan observances still prevailed in the country places; the clergy are warned against obscene conversation and drunkenness; the monasteries were to be looked after lest they become full of ludicrous arts, versifiers, harpers, and buffoons; the nunneries not places of junketing and luxury. Baeda, Alcuin, Wilfrid, all protest to the same tune. In fact, many of the monasteries, with lay priors, were like pleasant country-houses, and ended by becoming mere resorts of idleness and dissipation (Hook's *Archbishops of Canterbury*, vol. i. p. 276). And no one can read the scattered allusions to the courts of Æthelbald and Offa, which no doubt had many parallels, without knowing how much morality and simplicity suffered at the courts of kings.

figure of Christ in silver, with the four evangelists. Another book, placed on the high altar, has on it a figure of Christ in silver, erect and blessing with His right hand. Another is ornamented with the rays of the Divine Majesty in silver gilt, set round with crystals and beryls. Another has on its cover a single large beryl, set round on all sides with crystals." This Roman work started work of the same kind in England, and was soon equalled, if not excelled. The binding and illumination of books soon became of national importance. The cover of the *Lindisfarne Gospels* is entirely English design and work, and it is only one example out of many. Even painting, perhaps mosaic, followed Benedict Biscop from Rome; and Wearmouth, apse and walls, shone with the precise ascetic figures of the Virgin, the apostles and prophets, with the stories of the Gospel and the imagery of the book of Revelation.

This quiet monastic life, with its musical services, its literature, its gold-embroidered work, its rich ecclesiastical furniture, its books, is not quite unrecorded in English literature. There are passages in the poems of Cynewulf which bring portions of it vividly before our eyes. In his riddles on the sacramental paten or the chalice and the pyx, we are placed in the church; we see the priest "turning and changing the golden ring (perhaps the wafer) round and round;" and the people, "wise in spirit, watching it in mind; praying and naming it the saviour of those who do well; also the ring has glorious wounds in it which speak aloud to men" (Riddle lx.). We see the pyx of red gold held up before the congregation, and though tongueless, it spoke well and cried for men, "Save me, helper of souls!" Mysterious was its speech, its charm; let men bethink them of it (Riddle xlix.). Then we are brought into the monastery. There, in the cell, is the book-chest (Riddle l.) "standing firm on the ground, deaf itself and dumb and witless, that swallows things more costly than gold." We watch the "dark and swarthy-faced thegn (some Celtic noble) stowing away under its lid manuscripts that kings and queens desire." There, too, we see the missal or a Bible codex in the library, and trace the parchment from the skin to its illumination and its binding. It is "dipped in water, set in the sun, stripped of its hairs, cut with a knife, ground down with cinders, folded with fingers. Then the delight of the bird (the wing feather — the pen) wandered o'er my dusky surface when it had sprinkled me with healing water (this refers to the illuminations which preceded the writing). Then the wing swallowed the dye of a tree mixed with water

(the ink) and stepped over me, leaving black marks behind. Afterwards men covered me with protecting boards, drew a skin round me, decked me with gold, adorned me with the fair work of smiths, encased me with (gold and silver) wire; and my ornaments and my red purple, and the glorious possessions in me are famous far and wide. Shield I am to nations, if the children of men will use me. I helpful to men; great is my name; healing to heroes and I myself holy!" And lastly, we see the monk wonder-stricken to find the moth eating his books. "'Tis a marvellous wyrd," he thinks, "that a worm should devour the speech of men, and that this thief in the dark, this robber-guest, should be no whit the wiser for his eating."

When we pass from the arts as ministers of literature in the monasteries, and return to the influence of monasticism upon literature, we find that its indirect influence was very great on the variety and the development of letters. The great extension of the seventh and eighth century monachism and its corporate union spread the literature of each monastery to the others. Books and unique manuscripts were naturally exchanged between connected monasteries, and the copying of these was part of the employment of the monks and of the literary hacks at the court of kings. That which belonged to one, it was felt, ought to belong to all. Irish monks borrow books from Ealdhelm; he himself sends his treatise on Versification to Aldfrith, the King of Northumbria, and dedicates his *Praise of Virginity* to the learned nuns of Barking. Baeda and Acca, Boniface and Ecgberht interchanged books, and these are only two instances out of a multitude which might be given. Even between the nunneries and scholars there was, as we have seen, an interchange of literature, of manuscripts, of criticism.

Baeda's friendship with Trumbert and Sigfrid, with Acca and Benedict Biscop, with the men of Canterbury, enabled him to master the learning of the Irish, the Roman, the Gallican, and the Canterbury Schools. The account he gives of the authorities he used for his *Ecclesiastical History* illustrates this literary interchange still further. It was Albinus the abbot, educated by Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury, who persuaded him to write the book, and who sent him through Nothelm (who also gathered materials for him in the archives of Rome) all his information about the Church in Kent and the adjacent parts. He speaks of consulting all the writings of his predecessors. Daniel, Bishop of the West Saxons, sent

him materials for the history of the West and South Saxons and of the Isle of Wight. His story of Christianity in the province of Mercia and among the East Saxons was gained from the brethren of Lastingham. The writings and traditions of "our ancestors," and the relation of Abbot Esius informed him concerning the East Angles, and letters from Cunibert, Bishop of Sidnacester in Lincoln, told him of the sacerdotal succession in the province of Lindsey. All he wrote about Cuthbert was taken from the records kept at Lindisfarne. It is plain there was a literary intercommunion over the whole of England at the time of Baeda, and this was due to the corporate brotherhood of the monasteries.

Nor did this interchange of learning and discussion exist only within the bounds of England. One of the chief advantages which Roman monasticism brought to literature was that it opened out communication with the Continent, and increased thereby the means of literature. England extended its arms beyond itself. Every one has heard of the incessant movement to and fro of English and Irish scholars in the seventh century, and I need not dwell upon it. In the first half of the same century we know from Baeda that the intercommunion between Gaul and England was frequent; "Many fared, since few monasteries were as yet established among the Angles, to the monasteries of the Gauls, and they also sent their daughters to be there instructed;" and the story of the schools set up by Sigeberht of East Anglia on the model of those he had seen in Gaul, goes to prove this intercommunion. This was still further developed when the voyaging to Rome through Gaul began. Ireland then and Gaul, two different nations of distinct types, added at least some of their elements to the rise of literature in England, and did this through monasticism. Then also, through the same channel, the mighty influence of Rome — so many traces of whose ancient greatness the English saw in their own land with awe and curiosity — bore not only on the bishops who felt themselves in union with a greater tradition than that of their own nation, and members of a universal power; but also on the whole crowd of English clergy, secular and regular; on the women of rank and the nuns who cared for letters; on the kings and nobles, who, weary of war and turmoil, sought the monastic shades in England or in Rome.

This communication with the Continent, with the new ideas it brought into all the spheres of intellectual labour, was largely increased by the craze for pilgrimage which seized on England.

Kings shared in it; Caedwalla, Coenred, the East Saxon Offa, Ine and others took their journey to Rome. "Noble and ignoble," says Baeda, "laymen and clerics, men and women, outdid one another" in eagerness. Through Gaul, over the Alps, down through Italy, and over divers paths and provinces, the pilgrims went, enlarging that knowledge and quickness of reception which give men interest in literature and desire to make it; seeing men and cities different from their own, having adventures, touching many divers peoples and manners, becoming conscious of a larger world — things which add new materials to the feelings and thoughts, which are the roots of literature. The English missionaries, on the other hand, under Willibrord at the end of the seventh century, and under Boniface in the beginning of the eighth, converted Friesland and Germany, brought Englishmen into touch with folk related to themselves, re-animated and strengthened in this way their original temper of soul; and carried the fresh rough impulse and the new interests of the Franks into England.

The conversion of Friesland and the Saxon realms by Englishmen had, it is believed, a much larger influence on our literature than was till lately suspected, and there are theories which connect portions of the "Caedmon poems" with old Saxony. The closer bond with the Franks which arose from Charles Martel's sympathy with the mission work of Boniface continued after his death, and the literary connections between England and the great kingdom which was growing into the empire became extensive and important. This was one reason of the far-reaching influence of the School of York. Nor must we forget, though it is not directly connected with monasticism, that Charles the Great was in constant correspondence with English kings and with the seat of learning in York, at a time when he was collecting into a series, now unfortunately lost, the old war-sagas and the adventurous tales of the Germanic nations.

Monasticism, out of which many of these missions grew, and in extending which many of them ended, was thus one of the roots of the closer connection of England with Rome, Germany, and Gaul; and this connection added no slight impulse in various ways to the literary development of England in the eighth century. It was unfortunate that this impulse tended to weaken or to destroy vernacular literature, and to replace it by Latin; and it was characteristic of the national genius of Ælfred that he felt this misfortune, and strove to remedy it. It was still more unfortunate, if anything

in history can be called unfortunate, that just as England reached this point, and under the supremacy of Ecgberht might have won the peace which literature requires for her steady growth, the Danes broke in and swept away a harvest which might have ripened to a full ear.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RISE OF LITERATURE

Wessex and Mercia

The previous chapters have discussed the way of life of the English so far as it is represented in their literature before 800. A good deal of their poetry has been used in illustration, and has left, I trust, on the minds of the readers of this book, a distinct impression of their manner of thought when under those manifold emotions received from man and nature the shaping of which in musical words, when it is done lawfully and beautifully, is poetry.

These discussions have been general, and the quotations taken from poems which were written as far as we know during the seventh and eighth centuries. It will be fitting now, even at the risk of some repetition, to give a clear account, in order, of the rising of literature in our land after the coming of Christianity, and of the circumstances which surrounded and influenced its youth. This naturally falls into two distinct parts — literature in the South and literature in the North. The former may be more briefly dismissed than the latter. It rose rapidly with the arrival at Canterbury of Theodore and Hadrian; it decayed as rapidly after the death of Ealdhelm in 709. Moreover, it can scarcely be called English literature. What remains to us is wholly Latin, and might be left altogether aside in this history were it not that it has a certain bearing on the vernacular literature of Northumbria. In the North, on the contrary, our chief interest is in the vernacular poetry, and it ran, we may roughly say, a course of a hundred years. Caedmon began to write about the year 670, one year later than the coming of Theodore to Canterbury. The probable date of Cynewulf's last poem lies somewhere between 770 and 790.

The two literatures then began together, but their course was very different. The vernacular literature of the North

grew into a flourishing manhood; the Latin literature of the South perished in its youth. Literature in the South was an exotic, and it died because it was an alien. Literature in the North was of native growth; and it died from an alien blow. Its murderers were the Danes. In the ninth century, then, literature, north and south, had perished. The time came when below and above the Humber England's voice was as silent as the grave. Then the South again took up the pen it had dropped, and Ælfred restored not only the native, but the Latin literature of England. As yet, however, the time of Ælfred is far away, and I turn to the history of literature in Wessex and Mercia, from the coming of Augustine to its silence — from 597 to the death (if I have to choose a date) of Æthelhard of Canterbury in 805. After that I shall tell the history, in order, of Northumbrian literature till its overthrow by the Danes.

The books Augustine brought to England were a Bible in two volumes, a Testament, a Psalter, an exposition of the Gospels and Epistles, a book of martyrs and some apocryphal lives of the Apostles. Fresh books arrived in 601, and it is said that two of these MSS. of the Gospels still exist — one at Corpus, Cambridge, the other at the Bodleian.[1] Shortly after the baptism of 10,000 (?) persons in the Swale on Christmas Day 597, the place where the cathedral rose was occupied, and the abbey of SS. Peter and Paul (St. Augustine's) was founded. It became the seat of the first learning and literature that Rome carried to this land, and the books Augustine brought over were enshrined in it. The first library was begun, and with it the first schools. We cannot, however, say for certain that the Latin Mission at once founded schools in Kent, though Baeda says, speaking of thirty years later, that the wish of Sigeberht to have schools in East Anglia, such as he had seen in Gaul, was carried into effect by Bishop Felix, *after the pattern of the schools in Kent*. What is interesting is a conjecture of Earle's that there may have been Roman schools of grammar still existing in Canterbury when Augustine arrived. If Canterbury was not wholly destroyed

[1] If the illuminated MS. of the Gospels in Latin now in C.C. College be in reality that sent by Gregory to Augustine, as Wanley thought, it is a great treasure. Professor Westwood thinks that the drawings are the oldest remains of Roman pictorial art in this country, and, with the exception of a fourth century MS. at Vienna, the oldest he can discover anywhere.

The MS. of the Gospels in the Bodleian, which Westwood also declares is one of the oldest Roman MSS. in this country, is rubricated, but is without miniatures.

by the invaders, it is just possible that the Roman schools may have been spared.

It is still more interesting to know that not long after Augustine came, in 597, the Witan was held which enacted the first code of ancient laws that we possess written in our mother tongue. The title of this code runs thus: "This be the dooms that Æthelbrilht, King, ordained in Augustine's days." They were written in Roman letters, and this is what Baeda means when he says that they were "according to the Roman precedent" (*juxta exempla Romanorum*). They are the first piece of written English of which we hear.[1] We do not, however, possess them in the original Kentish dialect, but in a West Saxon translation, and in a register that dates from the twelfth century. This Kentish dialect[2] is, then, the first vehicle of English prose, and the schools of Kent were the rude cradle of English learning. However, there was very little care for English. All the archbishops up to the death of Honorius in 653 were Italian; and neither understood the English character nor could sympathise with any vernacular poetry. A certain amount of Art was, however, introduced in these first fifty years. Architecture, after the Roman model, began. Canterbury Cathedral was built of stone, in imitation of the Basilica of St. Peter, and Honorius introduced the Roman music. He was succeeded by Frithona (Deus Dedit), an Englishman, after whose death no archbishop was elected for four years. Then the election was put into the hands of Pope Vitalian, who sent Theodore of Tarsus, and Hadrian, an African monk of the Nisidan monastery, the first as archbishop, the second as his deacon, to England. Both were admirable scholars, and with them left an English scholar then staying

[1] In 673 the next Kentish code appeared. "Hlothhaere and Eadric, kings of the men of Kent, enlarged the laws their predecessors had made," etc.; and in 696 King Withred (691–725) *se mildesta cyning Cantwara* — "set forth more dooms."

[2] It is thought that the Epinal Glossary best represents the Kentish dialect. It is of the seventh century; an English-Latin Dictionary. There are also six documents of the first half of the ninth century which are written in this dialect (Codex Dipl. 226, 228, 229, 231, 235, 238. — Kemble). There is, too, a Psalter, with a gloss, now supposed to be a Kentish gloss. The Palæographical Society declares that this Psalter is of the year 700, and the gloss late in the ninth or at the beginning of the tenth century. Professor Westwood called it the Psalter of St. Augustine. It is plainly written in England and not in Rome, and is sometimes called the *Surtees Psalter*. It is worth while to record these remains of the Kentish dialect, because "from this dialect the West Saxon was developed; in other words, it is the earliest form of that imperial dialect in which the great body of extant Old English literature is preserved. Nevertheless, the Kentish did not ripen into the maturer outlines of the West Saxon dialect without the intervention of a third dialect, etc. etc." — Earle, *A.-S. Literature*, p. 97.

in Rome, Benedict Biscop. In May 669 Theodore was enthroned at Canterbury. Immediately after his enthronement he visited the English kingdoms, and he began to make English the tongue of Christianity by commanding that every father should take care that his children be taught to say the Creed and the Lord's Prayer in the vulgar tongue.[1] At the same time he took possession of St. Augustine's monastery, made it a school of learning, and set over it, till Hadrian's arrival in 671, Benedict Biscop. When Hadrian came, Theodore determined to make the English clergy a body of scholars. Day by day a greater number of disciples gathered into Canterbury from Ireland as well as England. "Streams of knowledge," says Baeda, "daily flowed from Theodore and Hadrian to water the hearts of their hearers." This was the true beginning of literature in the south of England.

There were classes for ecclesiastical music, arithmetic, and astronomy; for caligraphy and illuminating books; for medical subjects, for composition, especially for the making of Latin verse. Greek and Hebrew formed part of the instruction; the Latin writers were read. Rhetoric, theology, and the related subjects were taught; and Theodore's reputation for ecclesiastical learning and canon law extended over Europe. Some record of this learning soon appeared, and was stored in the library. This was the *Penitential of Theodore*, drawn up by some priest from Theodore's oral answers to questions concerning discipline; the first book of the kind published by authority in the Western Church, and "the foundation," Hook says, "of all the other 'libelli penitentiales' in England." Thus Canterbury became not only a centre of scholarship but a producer of books; and from this time there was no need to seek for learned foreigners to fill the bishops' chairs in the English kingdoms, or to instruct the people. The land had its own scholars, and soon taught its teachers.

Brihtwald, the next archbishop, is only interesting to us because he studied his own tongue. "He was a man," says Baeda, "whose knowledge of the Greek, Latin, and Saxon learning and language was manifold and thorough." Tatwine, who succeeded him in 731, was a scholar of Theodore, and was "splendidly versed in Holy writ." A few *ænigmata* in Latin

[1] Nor do I like to omit, as having some relation at least to English literature, the Ten Articles which Theodore drew up for signature by the bishops at the Council of Hertford in 673. This is "the first constitutional measure of the collective English race: no act of secular legislation can be produced parallel to it before the reign of Ælfred or rather of his son Edward." — Stubbs' *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, Art. Theodorus.

verse exist under his name, and it is said that he, like Ealdhelm, wrote some poems in Anglo-Saxon. Daniel, who assisted at Tatwine's consecration, Bishop of Winchester from 705–744, was perhaps the most learned bishop of this time. He helped Baeda in the *Ecclesiastical History;* he was closely bound up with Boniface, and corresponded with him; and the growth of the missions and of the West Saxon Church and schools was largely indebted to his work. But the scholar of the Canterbury school who gathered into himself all the learning of the time was Ealdhelm.

He was born about the middle of the seventh century, and was related to the royal family of Wessex. Being excited from his youth by the new learning, he joined himself to a school which had suddenly sprung up in his native province. A wandering Scot, one of the numerous scholars who in that age passed to and fro between England and Ireland,[1] Mailduf by name, set up a hermitage near the castle, called in Saxon Ingelborne Castle, built by Dunwallo Mulmutius, not far from the royal seat of Brokenborough. The folk in the castle gave him leave to build a hut, and he set up a school in it. This information, which may be authentic, is in a history of Malmesbury ascribed to William of Malmesbury, but which is not extant. Leland quotes it; but Stubbs says that we may infer from the mention of Dunwallo Mulmutius that the account cannot be earlier than the twelfth century. From William of Malmesbury's acknowledged writings we understand that Ealdhelm received his monastic habit at Malmesbury, and that there was a Mailduf, a Scot and hermit, who taught a school, and set up a small basilica. After a time, scholars crowded round him so eagerly, that the hut became the kernel of a monastery, and Ealdhelm who had taught there for many years was made, after Mailduf's death, the Abbot of Malmesbury (Maildulfi Burgus).

He had been a student at Canterbury with Theodore; with Hadrian whom he loved and honoured to the end. "My Father," he writes, "most beloved, venerable teacher of my rude infancy, I embrace you with a rush of pure tenderness;

[1] In one of Ealdhelm's letters, written to a friend of his who, after six years of study, had returned from "dark and rainy Ireland," he describes the host of English students who filled whole fleets, in going to and fro between England and Ireland that they might discover in Ireland the secrets of learning, "as if there were no masters in England of Greek and Latin who could unfold to them the problems of the celestial library." Then he describes with vigour the Canterbury schools, and the bands of Irish disciples who used to flock round Theodore. There was then a constant interchange at this time in the South, as there was also in the North, of English and Irish learning.

I long to see you again." The heart of Ealdhelm, below his pedantry, was so eager and natural that he won the love he gave. When he was made Bishop of Sherborne he wished his monks at Malmesbury to elect a new abbot. "While you live," they answered, "we desire to live with you and under your rule." It is said that when he returned from his voyages, not only did his monks meet him with hymns and songs and censers, but a crowd of the people danced before him with joy and gestures of delight. He possessed the sense of honour which was the natural heritage of his war-like race. In a letter to the clergy of Wilfrid he recalls the ancient devotion of thegn to chief, and challenges them to be as faithful to their head, as a warrior was to his lord. "What," he cries, "would be said of laymen who should abandon in his misfortune the master they served in good fortune; what of those who loved peace at home rather than exile with their prince?" He travelled continually through his diocese, preaching by day and night, and he died (709), on one of his journeys, in a Somersetshire village called Dulting near a church of wood which he was building. He set up monasteries, two especially, at Bradford on the Avon and at Frome;[1] and he advised Ine when that King undertook the restoration of Glastonbury. When he was made Bishop of the western division of the diocese of Wessex he carried still farther, in conjunction with Bishop Daniel, his educational work, filling Dorset and Somerset with monastic schools, and training, we may well think, men like Boniface and his comrades for their missionary work.

He was an architect as well as a preacher, and when the Norman architects saw his churches at Sherborne and Malmesbury, they owned their excellence and left them standing. Other arts were also his. If we may trust Faricius, he played on all kinds of instruments — as eager a musician as Dunstan. He is the first Englishman whose literary writings remain to us, and whose classical knowledge was famous. He wrote Latin verse with ease, and boasted that he was the first of his race who studied the Latin metres. He wrote a long treatise on Latin Prosody, and he showed what he could do in this way by the treatment in Latin hexameters of the stories told in his prose treatise *De laudibus Virginitatis*. He knew

[1] Sherborne, where his See was afterwards fixed, and Wareham, near Poole, were probably founded by him. We may fancy him wandering down from Wareham to look on the sea from that headland in Dorsetshire which first bore his name (St. Ealdhelm's Head), but which, overlaid with the name of an elder saint, is now St. Alban's Head.

and quoted Horace, Lucan, Juvenal, Persius, Terence, and others which might seem strange to his monkish habit. He read, according to his biographers, the Old Testament in Hebrew; he spoke Greek; he taught the usual course of learning and it is supposed he wrote on Roman Law. Among these severer studies, he played at making riddles in the manner of Symphosius, and as these riddles went to the North, with his treatise on Prosody, they gave afterwards to Cynewulf the impulse to compose similar enigmas. The Acircius to whom he sent this treatise was Aldfrith, King of Northumbria, a friend of his boyhood, whom he begs with great *naïveté* to read through the whole of his book. "It would be absurd," he says, "if you did not take the trouble to chew and re-chew that which I have taken so much pains to grind and knead for you." I doubt whether Aldfrith took the trouble, for the style, like that of all Ealdhelm's work, is always fantastic, pompous and full of rhetorical tricks. He writes Latin as Lyly wrote English in his *Euphues*, and his fancifulness often degenerates into a fastidious pedantry. He is keen and gay, but without humour. Perhaps no better specimen of his "precious" way of writing can be given than his letter about Theodore and his Irish scholars, the whole of which is written to display his gamesome and alliterative use of Latin. "Graeci involute, Romani splendide, Angli pompatice dictare solent," says William of Malmesbury, and Ealdhelm, he thinks, did well in all these styles. Amid this literary play he knew how to be an ascetic, as rigid and stern with himself as the Benedict whom he so much admired. The man we see reading Virgil and Terence in his cell, or writing a letter of alliterative Latin prose for his own entertainment, or making a riddle, is seen a few hours after, at least in the pages of William of Malmesbury, standing up to his neck in a well near the monastery, and reciting, in this primitive manner, on a wintry night, the Psalms of the Day. But that which makes us most happy to think of, is that he did not neglect the songs of his native tongue.[1] There is a well-known story told of him, how, as he went from town to town, and found that the buyers and sellers at the fairs did not come to church, he used, like a gleeman, to stand on the bridge or in the public way and sing songs to them in the English tongue, and by the sweetness of his speech lead them to come with him to hear the word of God. These songs which he had composed for the people lasted when his Latin work had passed from remembrance. Ælfred had

[1] Bishop Stubbs calls them *hymns*.

one, it seems, in his handbook, a *carmen triviale*, as vain a song, perhaps as heathen a legend, as Dunstan sang to his harp when he was a youth. Nor did the song die. Malmesbury says, in the twelfth century, that it was still commonly sung in England — *quod adhuc vulgo cantitatur.*

The variety and the contrasts in Ealdhelm were the result of an active intelligence, half intoxicated by the new wine of literature. Whatever we may say of his false taste in style, there is no doubt of the impulse he gave to literary activity and education in all directions. He had correspondence with Ireland, with Gaul, with Rome; Northumbria was influenced by his writings; and he wrote a letter on the schism between the British and English Church to Gerontius, King of the Damnonian Britons, which converted that King and his folk to the Roman usage concerning Easter. Among his many distractions he did not neglect the education of the more delightful sex. Osgitha, whom he urges to a deeper study of the Scriptures, is his "most beloved sister." "Most beloved" is not enough to express his affection. "Vale," he says in an outburst of tenderness, "decies dilectissima, imo centies et millies." To Hildelida, Abbess of Barking, he dedicated his *Praises of Virginity*, and with her he names, as bound to him by intimate friendship, Aldgida and Scholastica, Hidburga and Burngida, Eulalia and others. These knew, it seems, the classic poets; he quotes to them Ovid and Virgil, and bids them farewell with his own brightness and affection: "Valete, o flores ecclesiae, sorores monasticae, alumnae scholasticae, Christi margaritae, paradisi gemmae, et coelestis Patriae participes. Amen." This is, indeed, to make learning charming, and it was one of the reasons he did so much for contemporary, and so little for after learning.

When he died in 709 this literary life was in full stream. Not of it, but still, as we look back, not apart from it, was one ancient monument of English thought made under the guidance of Ealdhelm's faithful friend, Ine, King of Wessex. This is the *Laws of Ine*, the oldest West Saxon laws. Their date is about 690, and we have them in an appendix to the *Laws of Ælfred.*[1] They have this much literary interest, that as "the foundation of the Laws of Wessex, they were also the foundation of the Laws of all England." I quote one of them (taking Earle's translation, *A.-S. Lit.* p. 153), because it seems to skirt the edge of literature. It quotes two proverbs: "In

[1] This noble parchment of the Laws of Ælfred is, along with the oldest Saxon Chronicle, in Benet College (Corpus Christi), Cambridge.

case any one burn a tree in a wood, and it come to light who did it, let him pay the full penalty and give sixty shillings, *because fire is a thief.* If one fell in a wood ever so many trees, and it be found out afterwards, let him pay for three trees, each with thirty shillings. He is not required to pay for more of them, however many they might be, *because the axe is a reporter and not a thief.*" [1]

With Ealdhelm as Ine's friend and kinsman, and as co-worker with Bishop Daniel, we may fairly think that learning grew in Wessex, and extended with the extension of the kingdom. Indeed, we know that Ine was especially active in establishing monasteries and in the work of education. He found at Glastonbury the ancient church of wood, enriched it with treasures, and set up close beside it a church of stone which Dunstan rebuilt. It is the sole British church in England "which passed on unhurt into the hands of the Englishman." [2] He took part in the founding of Malmesbury and endowing of Abingdon. Sherborne and Bradford, Wimborne, Nursling, Tisbury, Waltham, Frome, rose under his care, and he may have had something to do with Wells. There is also a tradition which at least illustrates his reputation, that he, rather than Offa, set up the Saxon quarter at Rome. Meanwhile some light is thrown on the continuance of literary activity in the South by the things already told concerning the assistance given to Baeda in his history by the bishops and abbots of the south of England.

Incessant wars followed the departure of Ine to Rome. Wessex fell under the rule of Mercia in Æthelheard's reign; but his successor Cuthred recovered the liberty of Wessex at the battle of Burford. I mention this battle because it has a certain relation to literature. In it Æthelhun, the Proud Alderman, was the standard bearer of Cuthred. He bore the Dragon of Wessex in the van, and his bravery decided the fight. The account given by Henry of Huntingdon, part of

[1] These laws provide for the new Welsh population added to the West Saxon realm by the conquests of Ine. Ine had got as far as Taunton, which he founded as a border fortress, and Exeter may have, either before or not long after, become an English possession. At whatever date it became English, it did not cease also to be Welsh. It was divided into an English and a Welsh city. It is fitting again to draw attention to this mingling of the English and Welsh here in the South, as on the March, and in the North. There must have been an interchange of poetry, an influence of Welsh on English verse, of English on Welsh. The division of the two races, under Ine and his successors, had ceased to exist in the days of Ælfred. No distinction is made between them in Ælfred's laws. The Welsh were then absorbed into the English.

[2] Freeman, *English Towns*, p. 92.

which I quote, is probably drawn from the ancient song made after the victory.

"The armies being drawn up in battle array, and, rushing forward, Æthelhun, who led the West Saxons, bearing the royal standard, a golden dragon, pierced through the standard-bearer of the enemy. Upon this, a shout arose, and the followers of Cuthred being much encouraged, battle was joined on both sides. Then the thunder of war, the clash of arms, the clang of blows, and the cries of the wounded, resounded terribly, and a desperate and most decisive battle began. . . . The arrogance of their pride sustained the Mercians, the fear of slavery kindled the courage of the men of Wessex. But wherever Æthelhun fell on the enemy's ranks he cleared a way before him, his tremendous battle-axe cleaving, swift as lightning, both arms and limbs. On the other hand, wherever the brave king of Mercia turned, the enemy were slaughtered, for his invincible sword rent armour as if it were a vestment, and bones as if they were flesh. When, therefore, it happened that the King and the chief met each other, it was as when two fires from opposite quarters consume all that opposes them."

Cynewulf replaced Sigeberht who at first succeeded Cuthred in 755, and Cynewulf is also bound up with literature. The account of his death (784) given in the *Chronicle* under the year 755 is, as far as we know, the most ancient piece of connected prose in the English tongue. It seems fitting that Wessex, in which English prose and English history were developed by Ælfred, should be the kingdom which gave us the earliest piece of prose, and that this prose should be a piece of history. The latter part of it — the story of the fight — was probably in its original form a lay, reduced by some monastic annalist of Wessex to prose, and kept intact by the compilers of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* And it is extremely probable that it was put into prose at the very time, or a few years later than the events of which it tells; "it is, in short, by far the oldest historical prose in any Teutonic language. The style is of the rudest character, contrasting remarkably with the polished language of the later portions of the *Chronicle.*" This is Mr. Sweet's opinion, who adds that there are archaisms in it which escaped the eye of the ninth-century reviser. The narrative is so vivid, rough, and simple, and the things done so war-like and tragic, and the temper of the warriors so English, that I give it as it stands: —

755 (784).[1] In this year Cynewulf and the West Saxon Witan took from Sigebryht his kingdom, except Hamptonshire, for unrighteous deeds; and he had that, until he slew the alderman who had dwelt with him longest. And him, then, Cynewulf drove into Andred, and he wonned there until a herdsman stabbed him at Privet's-flood[2] (and avenged the alderman Cumbra). And this Cynewulf, in mickle fights, fought often with the Brito-Welsh; and, about 31 winters after he had the kingdom, willed to drive away an ætheling, who was hight Cyneheard (and this Cyneheard was the brother of that Sigebryht). And then (Cyneheard) heard of the king with a little band in a woman's company in Merton; and he beset him there, and surrounded the bower outside, before the men who were with the king found out that he was there.

But when the king knew it, he went to the door and warded him manfully, until he saw the ætheling, and then he outrushed upon him, and sorely wounded him; and they all ceased not to fight against the king until they had slain him.

And now the king's thegns, hearing the cries of the woman, were aware of the un-stillness, and they ran thither, whosoever then was ready and rathest. And to each of them the ætheling offered money and life, and none of them would take it; but they went on, always fighting, until they all lay (dead), except one British hostage, and he was sorely wounded.

Then in the morning the thegns of the king who had been behind him heard that the king was slain. Then they rode thither, even his alderman Osric, and Wiferth his thegn and the men which he erst had left behind him, and came up with the ætheling in the burg where the king lay slain. Now the ætheling's men had locked the gates against them, but they went up to the gates. And then the ætheling offered them their own doom of money and land if they would grant him the kingdom; and it was made known to them that their kinsmen were with him, who would not from him. And then said they — That no kinsman could be dearer to them than their lord, and they never would follow his slayer. And then they offered to their kinsmen that they should go forth sound; and they said — *That* had been offered to each of their comrades who erst were with the king. Then said they that they no more minded it than your comrades who were slain with the king. And they ceased not to fight about the gates until they got inside, and they slew the ætheling and the men who were with him, all but one, who was the alderman's godson; and he saved his life, and yet he was oft wounded.

It remains to say that up to this date, 755, Latin literature, written by Englishmen, is illustrated by the letters of Boniface. As Boniface was a Wessex man as well as Willibald, this may be perhaps the best place to touch on the most famous of English missionaries to the Continent, and to select the points where the missions influence English literature.

The first of them was Willibrord,[3] a Northumbrian, the Apostle of the Frisians, who was born in the year 657. The

[1] See Note, Earle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, p. 292 (1865).

[2] Doubtfully identified with Privet in Hants. — Sweet.

[3] His father, Willigis, representative of a noble house, had founded a monastic community in honour of St. Andrew, north of the Humber, on one of the numerous promontories of that coast, a house probably Celtic.

story of his life is told by two English scholars of this time, by Baeda and by Alcuin. He illustrates the literary intercommunion of the time between England and Ireland, for he left the monastic house at Ripon to join Ecgberht's and Wigberht's school in Ireland. After thirteen years of study he sailed to the Rhine to convert the Frisians (690). For nearly fifty years he laboured among the heathen, preaching in Friesland, among the Old Saxons, and touching the Danes, in which visit he landed on Heligoland, and saw the ancient shrine and fountain of Fosite. No one can tell, and it engages the imagination to think of it, how many Teutonic legends may have got into England from such wanderings, or how much of English sacred poetry, such as Caedmon's, may have been left behind at Utrecht, where Willibrord founded his archbishopric, or at Epternach, near Trier, where he set up a monastery; and the same suggestion may be made with regard to the missions both of Boniface and Willibald. He was also the first who brought the learning of England among the Franks, and, freeing it from insularity, increased its range. His friendship with Pippin, with Charles Martel, whose son, Pippin le Bref, he baptized, was the beginning of an association between English scholars and the Franks which — culminating with Alcuin and Charles the Great — influenced the growth of literature at home and abroad. The schools he founded at Utrecht were one of the centres of European civilisation.

Winfrid, to whom Gregory II. gave the name of Boniface, was much more connected with England than Willibrord, and knit still more closely together the English, the Franks, and the Teutonic nations the Franks subdued. Born at Crediton in Devonshire about 680, he was educated at Wulfhard's monastery in Exeter, transferred to Hampshire, and received priesthood when Ine was reigning in Wessex in 710. Eager to convert the heathen, he landed in Friesland in 716, but failing at that time to find success, returned to England and thence went to Rome. In 719 he was sent by Gregory to convert Central Europe. The Irish monks had preceded him in Thuringia. There he stayed for a time, and after a visit to Friesland returned to Thuringia. Many heathen remained in Thuringia and the lands around it, and Boniface worked among a congeries of German tribes in the great forests, amidst folk who spoke almost the same language as his own, and were indeed of kindred blood. He bound them and the other German tribes he influenced up with England, for he set over the sees and monastic houses he established English archbishops, bishops, abbots,

and nuns, along with a crowd of helpers whom he fetched out of England. In all his difficulties, and they were many, he took the advice of the English bishops, and Bishop Daniel, Baeda's correspondent, was his most trusted redesman. He entertained a constant interchange of letters with English monks and nuns, and the religious life of England was thus interested in the Continent. There was a constant going to and fro between England and Central Germany, and the influence of this on the literary elements in England, though small, must have been appreciable. His letters still interest us. They paint the time and the manners of the German tribes. The many schools he set on foot, especially the famous one at the monastery of Fulda, enable us, with some pride, to point to England as the mother of learning among the Teutonic tribes. He himself did not disdain the finer arts of literature. He wrote verses for his friends; he even composed a short poem for his sister of ten ænigmata, which is not wanting in grace and elegance; ænigmata not written for play, as those of Tatwine or Symphosius, but on the Christian virtues. The MS. which contains these pleasant Latin poems is in the British Museum. He fell, a martyr, in his Master's service, white-haired and bowed with age.

Fifty years or so before the death of Boniface in 755, Willibald, whom some think his kinsman, was born in Wessex, probably in Hampshire. His name is famous in the history of travel. So eager was the youth for voyaging that his father, his brother Winnibald, and his sister Walpurgis, gathered their friends together, broke up their English home, and went off, with this youth of eighteen, to Rome. It is a good illustration of the passion for pilgrimage, which, in the eighth century seized on Englishmen, and which enlarged, as I have said, their imagination and its shaping power. They left England about 718, and after many difficulties reached Rome. Willibald left his brother there, and travelled through Sicily, Ephesus, Cyprus, Tortosa, Emessa, to Damascus. Thence he visited Palestine, passing through all the sacred places near the Sea of Galilee to Jordan, Jericho, and Jerusalem. Four times (journeying meanwhile over the whole of Palestine, visiting Tyre and Sidon, Libanus and Mount Carmel) he stayed at Jerusalem, and reached Constantinople in 725, where he lived for two years. In 727, ten years after his departure from England, at the age of twenty-eight or thirty, he was received into the monastery of Monte Cassino, and after some years went to Rome, whence he was sent by Gregory III. to help his countryman, Boniface,

in the year 739. In 740 he met his brother, Winnibald, in Thuringia, and next year was made Bishop of Eichstadt by Boniface. The one literary interest of his life is his long and dangerous travel through the East, which we may say was recorded by himself, and which increased the imaginative materials of English learning. The nun who wrote this Voyage is said to have written it from his dictation.

Lullus, who succeeded Boniface as Bishop or Archbishop of Mainz in 755, may also be mentioned in this connection. He was a West Saxon by birth, and perhaps a kinsman of Boniface. Educated at Malmesbury, under Abbot Eaba, he left England about the year 732. He was in correspondence with England during his whole life. When he succeeded Boniface, "letters," says Bishop Stubbs, "poured in upon him from the ecclesiastics of his native land," in particular from the lords of Canterbury, Worcester, and Winchester. Later on he is again in communication, asking and giving advice, with Canterbury, Rochester, and Winchester, and with the King of Kent; and further on with the Abbot of Wearmouth, with Æthelberht, Archbishop of York — borrowing the books of Baeda and lending books on cosmography — with the Abbot of Ripon, with the Kings of Wessex and Northumbria. There is no better example, not even that of Boniface, of the continual intercourse between England and the Continent, than that afforded by the life of Lullus.

As to Willehad, a Northumbrian, and the other famous name among these English missionaries to Germany, whose appointment to Bremen was recommended by Lullus, there is nothing in his life except his friendship with Alcuin and Charles the Great, and the works he is said to have written but which remain unedited, to make him of any interest in a history of literature. He died, as Bishop of Bremen, and built, it is said, a church of wonderful beauty.

As we return from this episode we find little more to say of the history of literature in Wessex. Cuthbert[1] and Bregwin

[1] Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury from 740 to 758, did little or nothing for literature, but he was known as a writer of Latin verse. There are two things of his which, if they are genuine, have one an historical, and the other an artistic interest. He succeeded Walhstod, Bishop of Hereford, and in the epitaph which he wrote on Walhstod, he recorded the names of his predecessors in the See. In the second piece of Latin verse he describes the completion by him of a great cross which Walhstod had begun —

"Argenti atque auri fabricare monilibus amplis."

These two small sets of verse, which are only to be found in William of Malmesbury, "are, if genuine, two of the most interesting minor relics of eighth-century history in England, besides charters and councils." — Stubbs' *Dict. Christ. Biog.*, Art. Walhstod.

were succeeded in the Archbishopric of Canterbury by Jaenbert in 765, whose life ended in the midst of the struggle between Canterbury and the new Metropolitan See which Offa set up at Lichfield. Æthelhard, his successor, became a fugitive, and a letter sent to him by Alcuin allows us to see into how sad a condition learning had been reduced in Kent, and if in Kent, in the whole of the southern province. "Return," he says, "and bring back to the house of God the youths who were studying there, the choir of singers, and the penmen with their books. . . . Above all, let it be your strictest care to restore the reading of the Holy Scriptures." He won back, however, in 803 the supremacy of Canterbury, but he did not win back, nor did his successors, any of the learning which Theodore had originated. Literature was now nearly at an end in Wessex. The monasteries had ceased to be places of education, their abbots were chiefly laymen; reform, continually urged upon them, was as continually neglected, and at last the priests ceased even to be able to read their books.

It might have been expected that Ecgberht — who had passed his youth at the court of Charles the Great, and must have known Alcuin and been interested by him and by Charles' incursions into education; who must have heard of all that the English missionaries had done in Germany and felt the power Charles had gained through monasticism and Rome — would have, on coming to the West Saxon throne in 802, taken some interest in English learning and pushed it forwards, but there is no trace of any steady effort on his part in this direction. He was probably too much employed in bringing all England under his sway. In 828 Mercia fell before him. Northumbria submitted in 829; and the sole piece of literature belonging to his reign is the single verse of the war-song which recorded his victory over the Marchland — "Ellandun's stream with slain was choked; 'twas foully stained with blood."[1] Nevertheless, now that he was overlord of all England, and the country wrought into one politically, as it had been long one ecclesiastically, we might have looked for a fresh development of literature. But fate was against this hope. The Vikings had already made their first descent in 787 on the coast of Dorsetshire; and in 833 Ecgberht, warned by their ravaging of Ireland, Frisia, Scotland, France, and the Northern Islands, held a Witan to concert measures of defence against them. In 832 (4?) they descended on Sheppey, and the next year they came

[1] Another war-verse belongs to the next reign, to the victory won over the Danes at Ockley in 851 — "Men like corn in mowing time fell in both these mighty hosts."

to Charmouth. Those who had allied themselves with the Cornishmen were defeated by Ecgberht at Hengestdun in 835. They fell on London in 839, and plundered Rochester. 838 had found them in Lindsey and East Anglia, and on the coast of Kent. In 845 they were defeated on the Parret in Somersetshire. Up to this time the attacks had been desultory coast-raids. But in 851 Rorik, with a fleet of 350 sail, entered the mouth of the Thames, sailed up inside of Thanet, and up the Stour to Canterbury which he sacked with furious slaughter, and passed on to London, where he defeated Berhtwulf the Mercian King and entered the lands north of the Thames. Thence the Vikings went into Surrey, and were driven back in a great battle by Æthelwulf, King of Wessex. Nevertheless, in spite of English victories by land and sea, the Vikings wintered for the first time in England in the year 851(?), and held their place, till in 855 they transferred their winter camp to Sheppey. In 860 Winchester, the capital of Wessex, was plundered, and in 865, a great army wintered in Thanet, and devastated Kent. Then came the Danes in 866 — *The Army*, — resolute to conquer and settle instead of merely raiding like the Vikings. This *Army* wintered in East Anglia, and conquered Northumbria. When in 868 they marched towards Mercia and wintered on the Trent, Wessex was called in to help Mercia. For a time Mercia escaped, but soon after, all the great abbeys of the marsh country were destroyed, and in 871 *The Army* crossed the Thames into Wessex. It was met at Ashdown by Æthelred and Ælfred, and defeated with great carnage.

This is in brief the story of the final ruin of southern literature up to the days of Ælfred. The unhappy tale began in the days of Ecgberht. It is only too clear that he and his successors had something more important to do than cherishing learning. They were forced to fight year by year for the very existence of the country with these fierce sea-wolves, whose bitterest attacks were made on the monasteries. When we read that in 851 Canterbury had been sacked by the Danes, and see in this an image of the storm which fell on all the centres of education, we can understand how it was that Ælfred in his youth complained that he could not find a master to teach him Latin. There is no more then to say of literature in Kent and Wessex, till in the hands of Ælfred it arose again.

It would seem that we might now pass on to the history of the rise of Northumbrian literature, wherein all our chief work lies, but Mercia rose to great honour during the two hundred

years of which we have here written, and it is fitting to briefly touch the points in Mercian history which belong to the interests of literature. We have seen that sometime after Penda's death Mercia became Christian. Wulfhere, his son — 657–675, in the very years, that is, that vernacular literature began so bravely in Northumbria — founded a number of abbeys and monasteries. Medeshamstede — in the fen-country then subject to Mercia — may claim him as one of its patrons, but the whole story is mixed up with legend and forgery. Fable gathers also round other foundations attributed to him; but the growth of fable proves, at least, that centres of learning now arose in the heathen realm. Under Æthelred, who followed Wulfhere, the Mercian Church was organised. It ceased to have any Celtic elements. The King was a friend of Theodore and Wilfrid, and monasteries, in large numbers, were founded and endowed. With Æthelbald (716–757) his third successor, we touch literature more closely. Among the monasteries to which he was generous was that of Evesham, and Evesham was founded by Ecgwin, Bishop of Worcester. It is said, on the faith of two later biographies, that Ecgwin narrated his own life, and he has been called our first autobiographer, but, though it is right to record this, the thing is exceedingly questionable. Æthelbald was certainly mixed up with scholars, for Tatwine, Nothelm, and Cuthbert, all Archbishops of Canterbury and of Theodore's school, were connected with Mercia and perhaps appointed by the influence of the King. Moreover, Boniface and he were upon friendly terms, even though Æthelbald's life was morally disgraceful. The council at Clovesho, held in 747, was not only directed against the immoralities of the monasteries which seem to have lost in luxury all care for learning, but was also probably intended as a silent reproach to the King. We may also connect with his reign the story of Guthlac. The *Life of Guthlac*, written by Felix between the years 747 and 749, was contemporary with Æthelbald. We may, therefore, at least tend to accept the story told in it that when Æthelbald was young and an exile he was the friend and visited the hermitage of Guthlac, deep in the fen-country, on the site of which in later years rose the great Abbey of Crowland. This *Life*, however, is not a Mercian but an East Anglian book. It is dedicated by its writer, Felix, to Alfwold of East Anglia, and continues, after Baeda, the literature of biography among the English. The book lived, and was the cause of other literature. It was translated from Latin into Anglo-Saxon in the tenth or eleventh century. It

formed the foundation of the second part of a poem attributed to Cynewulf, which, if it be by him, supplies us with the sole date which belongs to the life of that mysterious poet. The story brings into vivid light not only the scenery of the fen-country, but the character of the young ætheling of the time when the influence of Christianity was still fresh, and acted on a national type lately emerged from heathendom.[1] The book represents Guthlac in contact with a great number of events important and unimportant, serious and ludicrous; and all of these, met in different ways by the saint, open out his pleasant character. Various persons are, moreover, brought into touch with him, and though the sketches of these persons are slight, they are clear-cut. Were it only for these sketches of our folk in the eighth century, the book ought to be more read than it is. It illustrates also the tender and colour-full

[1] I give here the passage which describes the youth of Guthlac, his sudden conversion, and his resolve to go into hermitage, and the description of his voyage. I have translated it from the Anglo-Saxon version that the English colour may be felt. The historical value of the extract as a picture of the character of a young Englishman is great, but its worth as a piece of good literature is the main reason for which I quote it. The original Latin of the eighth century is often florid, pompous, and rhetorical, but the conception and arrangement of the life is good. It represents work done more in the manner of Ealdhelm than of Baeda. The Anglo-Saxon rendering is probably of the tenth or eleventh century. It is agreeably written, with a natural and happy turn of phrase, and represents very well the kind of work which a simple-hearted monk of the new learning that started from Ælfred was capable of producing. The extracts then have the advantage of displaying something of the literary quality of two different centuries separated by perhaps two hundred years. But the events of the life described are of the eighth century.

"When his strength waxed and he grew to manhood, he minded him of the strong deeds of the heroes and men of yore. Then, as though he had woke from sleep, his mood was changed, and he got together a mickle troop and host of his comrades and himself took to weapons. Then he wreaked his grudges on his foes and burnt up their Burh, and ravaged their towns, and far and wide he made a manifold slaughter, and slew and took from men their goods. . . . For nine winters he carried on these raids, but it happened one night, on coming back from an outfaring, as he rested his weary limbs, that he thought over many things in his mind, and he was suddenly moved with the awe of God and his heart was filled within with ghostly love; and when he awoke, he thought on the old kings that were of yore who, through mindfulness of wretched death and the sore outgoing of a sinful life, forsook the world, and he saw of a sudden vanish away all the great wealth they had, and his own life hasten and hurry to an end, and he vowed to God that he would be his servant, and arising when it was day signed himself with the sign of Christ's rood." So he joined the monastery of Hrypadun, but after two years longed for the wilderness and a hermitage, and departing, heard of a vast desolation and was minded to dwell therein. The description of it is a clear picture of the watery places where Crowland grew into its later splendour. "There is in Britain a fen of unmeasured mickleness that begins from the river Granta, not far from the city which is called Grantaceaster. There stretch out unmeasured marshes, now a swart waterpool, now foul running streams, and eke many islands and reeds, and hillocks, and thickets, and with manifold windings, wide and long, it spreads out up to the northern sea."

imagination with regard to the supernatural, of which Baeda is so full. "At Guthlac's birth" — and I quote from the Anglo-Saxon version of the Latin — "men saw a hand of the fairest red hue coming out of the heavens, and it held a golden rood, and showed itself clear to many men, and bent forwards towards the door of the house wherein the child was born." Again, when the evil spirits have borne Guthlac to the very doors of hell and would fain push him in, the Apostle Bartholomew comes down to help him: "Then suddenly came down the indweller of heaven, the holy Apostle, with heavenly brightness and glory shining, amidst the dim darkness of swart hell; and the accursed ghosts could not abide there for the fairness of the holy Comer, and hid themselves in the darkness. But when Guthlac saw his faithful friend, he was very blithe with ghostly bliss and heavenly delight." Then at the command of the Apostle, the devils bear Guthlac back to his hermitage with gentleness. "So they brought him back with all mildness, and on their wings they bore him that he could not have been borne more pleasantly in a ship. Now, when they came in the midst of the highness of the lift, there came towards him a heap of holy spirits, and they all sang and said, '*Ibunt de virtute in virtutem,' et reliqua* — that is, in English — 'Holy men shall go from strength to strength.' When it began to dawn they set him down, and as he was about to fulfil his morning-prayer-tide to God, he saw two of the cursed spirits weeping and wailing greatly, and when he asked why, they answered, 'We two weep because our power is all broken through thee' . . . and they went off as smoke before his face." Picture after picture; there is a savour of Dante in it!

The love of animals also appears, that frequent virtue of the mediæval saint, out of which has grown so much charming literature. The ravens of the fen are at his command, and the fishes and the wild beasts. When Wilfrith, his friend, was talking to him of the spiritual life, two swallows came suddenly flying in, and behold they upraised their song rejoicingly, and after that, perched without fear on the shoulders of the holy man, and again uplifted their song and often lit on his breast and arms and knees. Now when Wilfrith, long wondering, beheld the birds, he asked why the fowls of the wild waste sat on him and were so tame. And Guthlac said, "Hast thou never learnt, brother Wilfrith, in holy writ, that the wild deer and the wild birds were the nearer to him who hath led his life after the will of God?"

In the place where Guthlac had lived, Crowland drew the

patronage of Æthelbald and after him of Offa, who, beginning his reign (757) over Mercia in some obscurity, had become, before his death in 796, the greatest king that England had as yet seen; but whose power went out, after his death, like a dying candle. We might imagine that this great prince whose charters are "more numerous than those of any other king of his age," who was the friend of learned persons like Alcuin, who had relations of close correspondence with the court of Charles at a time when Charles was patronising and advancing learning, would have created around him some kind of literature. This is so natural a conjecture that some persons have either asserted or suggested it. Professor Earle conjectures that Hygberht, the sole Archbishop of Lichfield, whom Offa set up as a rival of Canterbury, was the writer of the existing poem of *Beowulf*. Others seem to suggest that Cynewulf was a Mercian or of a Mercian school. But there is no evidence of any literary school, capable of producing poems like *Beowulf* and the *Elene*, in the court or kingdom of Offa. The fabulous tales, however, which had collected round the ancient hero of the continental England, round Offa the son of Wermund — tales which were part of a legend common to England and Scandinavia — were mixed up with Offa of Mercia. They make him thus one of the subjects of literature, but they obscure all his early history. His life was a life of wars and eager policy. His patronage of the Church was for his own ends, and St. Albans was founded by him as a make-weight against an immoral life which had, by the evil example it gave, a bad effect on the monasteries and therefore upon their learning. At his death Mercia lost all power, and in 828 it was swallowed up by Ecgberht. Not many years after Ecgberht's death, the whole of Mercia was fought over by the heathen. All the monasteries perished; learning and the materials of learning were for the most part destroyed. Middle as well as Southern England was drowned in ignorance.[1] Yet we must not forget that the popular lays, the ballads, and the war-songs still continued. The wandering minstrel still went from hamlet to hamlet; the Scôp still made his verses in the camp, and the legend which tells how Ælfred sang to the harp in the tents of his foes, tells us that when the Muse has been driven from the seats of learning, she finds a shelter among the people.

[1] The western part of Mercia was not, however, harried so mercilessly as the rest of it. There seems to have lingered there some of the means for building up, when peace came, a new home for learning. In 873 Werfrith was made Bishop of Worcester, and he seems to have been able to establish a school in that city, and to develop it after the peace of Wedmore. But this, and the help he gave to Ælfred, does not belong to the present history.

CHAPTER XIV

LITERATURE IN NORTHUMBRIA

It was in Northumbria that English literature, as distinguished from Latin literature in England, arose, and it reached in that northern land a remarkable and varied development. It was also in the same region that Latin learning and literature, written by English folk, attained its highest excellence. The English literature began with Caedmon of Whitby, and he created, as we hear from Baeda, a school of poetry, and this is one of the earliest vernacular literatures of which we know in modern Europe. The Latin literature is fully represented by the work of Baeda, and his work was the greatest done in Europe at the time, and may be said to be the foundation or impulse of all mediæval learning. Thus in the seventh century, in our own land, the dance of the modern Muses began. Those of them who recited their thoughts in the Latin tongue — the Muse of History and of divine Philosophy — ceased in England after a brief period their noble speech, but found their voice afresh, when many centuries had passed, in our native tongue. Those who sang in English, the Muses of Poetry — of epic, tragic and lyric strains, — sang for too short a time in the ears of all, then also ceased or seemed to cease in England. Their song was still heard, but only on the lips of warriors and wandering bards, in camp and village. Lowlier and lowlier was its sound, but its hour came at last. Again the Muses took up the English lyre for all the world to hear, and their first strains were coincident with the time of the Great Charter. As the people grew in freedom and in power so swelled the Muses' voice, ever louder and sweeter and in more varied music, from century to century, until the present hour.

It is the beginning of this poetic life in our own England which we have now to consider. Its early life in Northumbria lasted not much more than a century, from about 670 to

about the year 800. The poetry is remarkable for two things which do not generally characterise the earlier efforts of song — for a comparative excellence and for variety of range. The excellence is only comparative: we get more art in the poetry than we expect, more originality, more happy surprises, more personal feeling well expressed than we should imagine possible in the childhood of a literature; but when we look at the poetry by itself alone, it is not, with a few exceptions, of a high class. When we consider its variety of range, we can speak with a less uncertain tone. From this point of view it deserves high attention. During the short time it lasted, it tried and touched, as if driven to extend its swelling life in all directions, a great number of different modes of poetry. All we have of it is contained in the MS. of *Beowulf;* in two books, one kept at Exeter and another found at Vercelli; in the *Chronicle* and in a few other MSS. They are all of no great length: a man might read them through in a few days, but in their narrow space there is an astonishing variety, — and variety of methods and subjects prove a keen individuality and an eager life in the poets of a people. *Beowulf* took its shape, at least so I believe, in Northumbria, and *Beowulf* has some relation to an epic. The three books of *Judith* that remain to us out of twelve are, like an epic poem, freely invented and imaginatively developed from existing legends. Out of the paraphrasing of the Bible which Caedmon began, arose a narrative poetry which treated episodes of the Bible as if they were lays in a Saga. Hymns, songs of praise and prayer were certainly written by Caedmon, as well as poetic narrative. The religious lyric was born. If we should dare to impute to Caedmon or his school the long episode of the Fall in the *Genesis,* or the *Exodus,* or the series of cantatas on the life and triumph of Jesus over Satan, we should be able to refer to Northumbria three other types of poetry; and for my part, I hold that these, however later than Caedmon the critics may put them, were written under the influence, the close influence, of the Northumbrian Master. This poetry is also full of a dramatic manner, and this manner grew in Northumbria. The story in the more ancient Caedmonic poems and in the *Judith* is often told in dramatic conversations. The *Christ* of Cynewulf possesses long passages which might be sung at a miracle play.

Nor does this exhaust the range of Northumbrian song. The *Riddles,* of which there are a gathering of eighty-nine, are full, as we have seen, of the poetry of natural description, of

nature almost loved for her own sake. Biographies, such as Guthlac's, were also made into poetry, and adorned by pleasant flowers of rhetoric. The wild legends of the saints, as of *St. Andrew*, were taken up, and woven into supernatural stories; and a Saga subject, like that of the "Invention of the True Cross," was seized, and treated in part like a heathen tale of war and adventure. Allegorical poems, already touched with mediæval mysticism, such as the *Phœnix*, the *Panther*, and the *Whale*, engaged, in an hour of leisure, the poet's hand. An extraordinarily personal poem, of passionate religious autobiography, is founded on a dream of the Holy Rood; and there exists a long threefold poem by Cynewulf, in boldly connected divisions, on the whole of the mission and work of Jesus, which passes through the Incarnation and the Ascension, till it embodies, and with an original and noble treatment, the great subject of the Last Judgment. In the midst of these there are poems concerning the works and fates of men and collections of sententious verses which tell of the proverbial wisdom of men, of their sorrows and their religion; and lastly, there are four elegies, two of which are of excellent quality.

This is a remarkable range of poetic methods, contained in a small space, and it is, for its time, unique. It presents to us a curious problem. How did it happen that this native poetry — poetry other than the war-song which was universal — arose in Northumbria, and took there so wide and so imaginative a range? What were the elements which nursed this vernacular growth, and did not exist, so far as we know, elsewhere than in Northumbria?[1] The reasons for such a flowering of song ought to be found in the years preceding 670–700. Those that

[1] I assume that there was no early West Saxon or Mercian poetry of this excellent and varied kind, and I think one has the right to assume it. It may be said that there was such poetry in Wessex during the seventh century, and we have lost it. It is possible, but then I think we should have had some allusion to it made by Baeda, Ealdhelm, Ælfred, or his biographers. At any rate, we know nothing about such poetry, and our question remains, How did it happen that English verse *began* in Northumbria? The question becomes more important, if, as I think, Cynewulf and his school, who carried on the work begun by Caedmon, were also Northumbrian, and if *Beowulf*, as I also believe, was thrown into its present form in Northumbria. But these beliefs are as yet open to discussion. What we can say, in general, is that we know there was a school of vernacular poetry in the north during the latter half of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century; that we do not know of such a school at this date in the middle or the south of England, and that it is much more probable that poetry should be further developed where it has already existed, than in a country like Mercia where we never hear of poetry, or in a country like Wessex where we only hear of Ealdhelm making a light song or two for singing in the streets. At present the question is, Why did poetry in the *seventh* century arise in Northumbria?

I here suggest can scarcely be called more than conjectures, but at least they place before the mind the question which any historian of Anglo-Saxon literature ought to consider one of the most important questions he has to ask himself.

The first of these elements is the early greatness of Northumbria, and the influence its tradition of national splendour had on the minds of men. The pride of country which this awakens has always been an impulse to poetry. The finest poetic times of England are coincident with the sense of national greatness and unity, which, following on an era of splendour, uplifts the people to a high level of constant passion. This was the case in the days of Edward III.; it was still more the case in the time of Elizabeth; it has been the case in our own century. Nor is the outburst of song, which began with Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, and died out with Keats, apart from this experience, though it may seem so. It was not a special national glory which then fired the poets, but the glory of the whole of the Nation of Humanity which seemed to their minds to rise suddenly into splendour and unity and brotherhood, and to be filled with immortal hopes. In such times the past sends its impulse into the present and excites it; the present is full of its own eagerness and joy; and the future seems to thrill with expectation. Poetry is then born or if not actually born, the nation is then pregnant with it; and in the times of peace which follow this national triumph the child opens its eyes to the light.

Such conditions prevailed in Northumbria in the seventh century. Æthelfrith, who reigned from 593 to 617, raised his country to great honour; and his victory at Chester secured the supremacy of the English in the North. He was followed by his brother-in-law, Eadwine, whose supremacy was established far beyond Northumbria. Almost the whole of England owned his sway, and every Northumbrian must have felt the pride of country. Then he set up his capital at York, and a touch of the greatness of Rome, for York was the capital of Roman Britain, was linked to his name. This new splendour was imaged in the standard of purple embroidered with gold and in the Roman tufa, the feather tuft on the spear, which were borne before him on his journeys. Added to these things was the profound peace which Eadwine established, and the good government which filled the peace. So widespread was justice that the tradition ran and lasted that a woman with her babe might walk scatheless from sea to sea. When he died then in 633 the sense of national splendour, peace, unity, and over-

lordship was keen in the heart of every Northumbrian, and it lasted for more than a century. Oswald, his successor, strengthened this impression. He, too, was overlord of the greater part of England, and he became also a centre of that spiritual glory which saintship shed around him in his people's eyes. He stood side by side, among his thegns, with Aidan the Apostle of Northumbria, interpreting the message of Christ. Legend made sacred his memory; a lovely story tells that the hand which gave to the poor remained for ever undecayed; a pillar of light rose to heaven from his body; a miracle found his body. So eager was the Christianity of Northumbria under Oswald that a great part of England was evangelised by the King's missionaries; and his name still abides in many churches. Thus to the political splendour and leadership of Northumbria was now added a spiritual splendour. Oswin, his successor in Deira, was as closely linked to Aidan as Oswald; and when Oswiu, King of Bernicia, slew Oswin, and made Northumbria one again, the political splendour was more than maintained by this great King. Nor was the spiritual glory less. The last heathen King of Mercia, Penda, who had made the North tremble, fell before Oswiu, and Mercia became altogether Christian under his missionary bishop Ceadda. In his reign also the breach between Rome and the North was healed. The Synod of Whitby (664) added all the emotional influence of Rome as the great mother of the Christian world and the power which went back to the apostles, to the spiritual grounds of literature; and this was followed by the ecclesiastical unity of the whole of England. This was done from the south, but Northumbria might fairly say, *quorum pars magna fui*. With Ecgfrith, Oswiu's successor, the spiritual and political splendour of Northumbria still lasted. His great friendship with Cuthbert kept alive in the large number of monasteries which were now spreading learning and civilisation far and wide the sense that the spiritual nobility of Northumbria was as great as its political splendour. It is true that when Ecgfrith fell on the murky day of Nechtansmere the warlike supremacy of Northumbria over England also fell, but this was for a time an advantage rather than a disadvantage to Northumbria. The internal condition of the country had been sorely altered for the worse by the incessant wars of Ecgfrith. Aldfrith, his successor, was a lover of peace and, concentrating Northumbria within her own borders, developed the kingdom. Within those borders her greatness and happiness still endured. Her lordship over others was lost; her lordship over herself was not

lessened. Peace, while it is so close to warlike glory as still to be thrilled with its excitement, begets new literature, and Aldfrith himself was the image of the literary excitement which the political and religious splendour of Northumbria awakened and supported in the minds of men. Ecclesiastical purity had begun to decay at his death (705), and he had lost some of his dominions at the hand of the Picts, and both these circumstances diminished the glory of his kingdom. But literature still lived on, even through the weak and immoral reigns of Osred, Coenred, and Osric. Ceolwulf, Baeda's friend, succeeded them, and when he came to the throne in 729, the ancient glory again shone brightly, but briefly, before it was finally quenched in anarchy. We see, in the prologue and epilogue of the *Ecclesiastical History*, and in the special care which Baeda bestowed on the history of his own province, how much the sense of Northumbria's greatness influenced her chief writer. Long after Ceolwulf's death, when the land had fallen into ruinous disorder, the memory of her glory still lasted like a slumbering fire in the hearts of men, and produced a poetry of regret for the passing away of that which once had been so great, tinged, as it were, with the beauty of the dying sun. Much of the poetry of Cynewulf preserves this melancholy charm.

This, then, I suggest, was one of the elements which caused a native poetry to rise in Northumbria. But this would not, without an additional consideration, do much to explain the problem. Mercia, it might be said, had its splendid time, and so had Wessex, but they produced no English verse with which we are acquainted. One reason they did not, was that when their years of glory came, Roman letters had seized on England, and the influence of Rome was to make Latin alone the tongue of learning and art. But this was not the case at the beginning of the Northumbrian supremacy. It might have been the case had Paullinus stayed in the North. But this Roman monk fled at Eadwine's death (633). Had he established a Latin Christianity and a Latin learning, it is probable we should have had no vernacular Christian poetry. All who were emotionalised by Northumbria's political and religious greatness would have expressed their emotion on their own subjects in Latin verse, or not have cared to preserve any English verse.[1] But,

[1] Of course I do not mean that the early Northumbrian poets wrote poems on the glory of Northumbria, but that the whole nation being excited, and with them the poets, on this point, the poets could not help writing on their own subjects under the sway of the national emotion. Heated, they used that heat on matters other than the original source of their heat.

fortunately, at the beginnings of Christian and patriotic emotion in Northumbria, Rome was almost unrepresented, and Christianity was established in the North by Irish missionaries — that is, by men who, feeling the passion of nationality strongly and in opposition to the denationalising literature of Rome, were in the habit of using their own language for poetry, not only on warlike subjects (on which every nation speaks in its own tongue), but also on all sentimental, imaginative, and religious subjects. This habit became, I suggest, the habit also of Northumbria. I do not think that it even occurred to the Northumbrian monk, trained by Aidan and his followers, to write his sacred poetry in Latin. Baeda, who was of the Latin school, did write his poetry in Latin verse. But he also loved English verse, and even wrote it. He was so far influenced by the national feeling for English. But his practice illustrates what would have happened if all the monasteries had been, like Jarrow, linked to Rome. We should have had no English school of poetry. As it was, there were many laymen writing English verse, and the monk in a monastery founded by the Irish wrote as naturally in English as an Iona monk would write in Irish. Not only did Caedmon, about fifteen years before the death of Ecgfrith, sing the creation of the world and the Redemption in English, but it seemed natural and best to the heads of his monastery to encourage him in this vernacular verse.[1] It was just this fortunate turn, this happy temper in the heads of Whitby — a temper which was the product, I think, of their Irish instead of their Roman training — which nourished Christian poetry in English. The impulse, once given, continued. Honour, even a divine origin, was given to vernacular verse. Scholars like Baeda admired and loved it, princes and nobles adopted and supported it. When, then, the influence of Roman learning came in literary form to the North with the writings of Ealdhelm, it was, fortunately, too late for Rome to Latinise poetry — a vernacular poetry had been established. In one word, the flight of Paullinus, which meant

[1] He could not, probably, have sung it in Latin, and this was also a piece of good luck; but the point here is that the heads of his house were delighted with this English versing of sacred subjects, thought it inspired, and encouraged the poet to develop his powers in English. This would not, I think, have been the case at Canterbury under Theodore, or at Malmesbury under Ealdhelm. They, gripped by the Latin convention, would have looked coldly on English verse on solemn subjects written by one who was not a scholar. Ealdhelm, for example, did not, as far as we know, write on grave Christian themes in English verse. His songs on the bridge, of which the story speaks, seem to have been *carmina trivialia*. The Northumbrian scholar, on the contrary, trained by the Irish, preferred to voice his religious emotions in his own tongue.

the flight of Latin as the tongue of literature, enabled an English poetry to develop itself.

It is also probable that the Irish school who had evangelised the North felt that there would be a struggle between them and Rome for supremacy, and feared with good reason that they would be beaten. Their tendency then would be to encourage English as a vehicle for religious poetry rather than Latin. The struggle did take place, and Rome won the battle. But, again, the victory was not finally gained till a vernacular poetry had begun. The Synod of Whitby, though it settled the Easter quarrel on the side of Rome, did not prevent the enthusiastic reception of English poetry, six years afterwards, by the very persons who had attended the Synod, and in the very place where it was held. Even the coming of Theodore to Northumbria in 678 and 684, and the overthrow of the dominance of Irish influence, did not replace English by Latin as the vehicle of poetry, then or afterwards. Between these visits of Theodore, Caedmon had fixed poetry into English; the whole country — kings, nobles, people — had become accustomed to a national poetry in the tongue of the nation. Having begun, it went on. The beginning is half the deed in literature.

There is yet another probable reason for the prevalence of a Christian poetry in English. The kings, and no doubt the nobles of the seventh century were close friends of the missionaries from Iona, and many of them were brought up at Iona. They would not be likely to care exclusively for Rome nor for Latin learning, and whatever influence they had would more tend to support English than Latin poetry. Moreover, Oswald, going about with Aidan on his missionary journeys, and translating to his nobles and thegns Aidan's preaching into English,[1] would be as much interested in English as a means of sacred teaching of the people as Ælfred afterwards became in the South; and had Caedmon risen in his time would have rejoiced in his English poetry. Oswin was as much bound up with Aidan as Oswald. Oswiu was baptized and educated in Iona, and would have, during the earlier part of his reign, the same interest in English as a sacred literary tongue as his predecessors. This conjecture is, however, founded on but slender evidence. There is much plainer evidence to show that the Northumbrian kings in the seventh century were suspicious that the spiritual power of Rome might tend to

[1] "It was the most charming of sights," says Baeda, "to see the King interpreting to his thegns and chiefs the discourses of Aidan who as yet spoke imperfectly the tongue of the Angles, for in his long exile the king had thoroughly learned the language of the Scots." — *Eccles. Hist.* Bk. iii.

denationalise Northumbria. If this be the case, they would encourage an English rather than a Latin literature, when such a literature had once begun. Wessex and Mercia also in later days stood out against the claim of Rome to sit above the national feeling; but when this struggle of theirs arose Latin was already the tongue of literature. But, at this time in Northumbria, Latin was not the tongue of literature. When Christian poetry began it began in English. Having begun, the kings and nobles whose policy it was to keep up the separate nationality of Northumbria would support it as one of the elements which strengthened national feeling.

It is possible to put this conjecture into a connection with known events. To establish Latin as the only tongue of sacred literature would be a part of the struggle which Rome made. It seems to me very probable that Wilfrid, who was at the head of the Roman party, would make that a part of his programme, and, if so, English, as the tongue of sacred poetry, would be in danger at his hands. His effort to romanise the Church was at first supported by many high-placed Northumbrians, by Alchfrith, Eanfleda, and others. For some years he was apparent master of the Northumbrian Church. The great monastic foundations of Hexham and Ripon may be said to have been his. A multitude of monks obeyed him; kings and nobles sent their children to be brought up by him. In splendour of expenditure and in show he rivalled Ecgfrith himself, and could he have kept his temper, and behaved with less desire of power, with less intrigue, he might have got the Northumbrian kings and monasteries into his hands and the English seed of literature might never have grown into a tree. This danger may have been increased by the fact that his great friend, Benedict Biscop, had now made Wearmouth and Jarrow a centre of Roman literature and art. It was then of importance, I conjecture, for the prevalence of English as the tongue of poetic literature that Wilfrid's ascendency should suffer. His pride, perhaps his interference with Ecgfrith's domestic relations and his quarrel with Theodore drove him from the country. It may have been owing to this quarrel that Theodore, while determined to bring Northumbria under the ecclesiastical order of Rome, was not intolerant of the Celtic or the national elements in Northumbria, and set over the new Sees into which he divided Northumbria bishops who had been brought up in Celtic monasteries — Eata[1] at Hexham, Bosa at York, while

[1] Eata was one of the twelve Northumbrian boys whom Aidan trained at Lindisfarne. Ceadda or Chad was another; and Theodore, after deposing him

Cuthbert was settled at Lindisfarne. On all sides the encroaching and intolerant influence of Wilfred was set aside, and the trouble he caused in Church and court may have been one reason why the Northumbrian princes became more and more determined to keep their national individuality clear of Rome. One result of all this would be that English poetry would escape from being crushed out by Latin verse. Even Ecgfrith, while submitting to Theodore, kept the Church in Northumbria national, and supported, especially by his friendship for Cuthbert, the distinctly English school of monks, who, though they had yielded to Rome, retained their individual ways of thinking. We might even see in the fate which caused Ecgfrith to be buried at Iona a parable of this lingering Celtic influence.

Aldfrith, who succeeded him, equally supported the nationality of the Northumbrian Church; and his education at Iona, and partly, it is said, in Ireland, as well as his training as Ealdhelm's fellow-pupil, made him much more cosmopolitan in learning than Rome may have wished him to be. At one with Theodore's policy of comprehension, he had also strong Celtic sympathies. I imagine that he was all the more Northumbrian because Irish and Latin elements were mixed in him. Between the individualism of the Celt and the collectivism of the Roman, he found a middle point in a strong Northumbrianism. We may be certain then that a national English poetry, especially Northumbrian, found favour in his eyes; and indeed at his death in 705 the whole of Caedmon's work was afloat in Northumbria; those who formed themselves upon Caedmon had established a school of English sacred poetry, and another school had begun, not only of sacred but of profane poetry.

These are the reasons why I think that English had in Northumbria a chance as the tongue of poetry which it had not elsewhere, and why, having begun at Whitby about 670, it continued, in spite of the rapid and parallel growth of Latin literature. The school of Theodore and Ealdhelm did not encourage English poetry to develop itself. The schools of Baeda and of York continue to admire and support English poetry sixty years after its beginning. The contrast is re-

at York, made him Bishop of Lichfield. Bosa was brought up by Hilda, and Cuthbert was, of course, brought up among the Celtic missionaries. There was then a parenthesis in Northumbria during which the Celtic influence was mixed on equal terms with the Latin. It was during this parenthesis that English poetry gathered strength and fixed itself.

markable. We now turn to a different matter. What were the influences which bore on Northumbria and not on Mercia and Wessex, and which tended to make Northumbria a more fruitful soil for poetry than Wessex or Mercia? We are driven here, as before, to suggestions which may or may not be of value.

The first suggestion is that the geographical position of Northumbria brought it into connection with a greater mixture of races than was the case elsewhere. The whole of Cumbria or Strathclyde lay on the west and north-west of it, and in Cumbria there was a mixed population; of the Irish who drifted down into it from the North beyond the Clyde, of the Picts who lived in Galloway, and of its own Welsh indwellers, all three speaking different dialects of the same tongue, and in conversation more or less comprehending one another.[1] Each of these *nations*, if I use Baeda's term which does not carry our meaning of the word,[2] had their own poetry, both warlike and Christian. Even the Picts in the North had, in the seventh century, received enough of Christianity from Columba to have sacred song among them in their own tongue, and in Aldfrith's time the learned men of the Pictish king's court translated Ceolfrid's letter about Easter into their own literary language. The Northumbrian tongue came into contact, both in war and peace, with these peoples, — with the Welsh of Strathclyde, with the Irish of Dalriada, even with the Pictish Gaels. During the various periods when they lived under the overlordship of the Northumbrian kings of the seventh century, intermarriages probably took place, and, on the borders at least, something resembling a common language arose, I conjecture, between the English and these peoples. Moreover, under Eadwine, the British kingdom of Elmet was subdued, and we have no proof that the inhabitants were wholly driven away. All this contact of the Northum-

[1] Columba conversed freely with the Picts from king to peasant without any difficulty. It was only when he preached that he was forced to use an interpreter. So says Adamnan in the seventh century. (See also, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, Skene, p. 137, vol. 1.) It does not follow, however, that the Welsh language of Cumbria was understood as easily by Picts or Irish, except on the marches.

[2] Baeda says of Oswald, "Denique omnes nationes et provincias Britanniae, quae in quatuor linguas, id est Brittonum, Pictorum, Scottorum, et Anglorum, divisae sunt, in ditione accepit." All these folks at the time of Baeda, "cultivated, each in its own dialect, the sublime study of Divine truth, and Latin, by the study of the sacred Scriptures, had become common to them" (*Eccles. Hist.* ch. i) It is plain that there was an interchange among them of their religious thoughts, perhaps even of their literature.

brians with these varied races, or with various growths of the same original stock, had already begun at the beginning of the seventh century, before, let us say, the death of Eadwine in 633, and, after that time, it continued and increased. Intercourse with the Welsh existed in other parts of England, but it was greater in Northumbria than elsewhere. Intercourse with the Irish existed also in parts of England, but it was only between wandering Irish scholars and English scholars. In Northumbria it was more constant, and of an Irish people with an English people. Intercourse with the Gael took place nowhere else in England, but in Northumbria it had gone so far that before Baeda died a Pictish king sent for architects to England, and was in direct communication with the monastery of Wearmouth. This interchange of the thought and oral literature, accompanied by the occasional intermarriage, of English and Welsh and Irish and Picts was, I think, one of the causes of a greater capacity in Northumbria for producing good poetry than was likely to exist in other parts of England, where the foreigners affected the English stock only on the western edges of Mercia and of Wessex.

One more suggestion I may make in this connection. If Mr. Skene and others be right in their conjecture that in the fifth century some of the continental English had settled south of the Forth, this mixture of the English, Welsh, and, it may be, of the Picts north of the Forth had here already taken place, and Eadwine, when he drove his way to the Forth, came into touch with the descendants of an English tribe who had added to their own oral poetry the poetry of the Gael and the Welsh. This old English stock would harmonise in time with the Angles, and bring them into closer touch with the foreigners and their literature.

We have good grounds for thinking that such a literature did exist among the Cumbrian Welsh at this time. The scenery and events of some of the historical poems in the *Four Ancient Books of Wales* lie, Mr. Skene says, in the north; the poems are due to Welsh bards of the North, and are older than the tenth century. They are, in fact, the literature of the dwellers in Cumbria, before the subjugation of Strathclyde in 946. He supposes then that the wars of the Britons against the Picts and Scots, and then against the Angles of Bernicia, produced a body of Welsh popular poetry, which was brought into shape in the seventh century (the century we are dealing with), and that the earliest consistent shape of the

historical poems we have was of that century.[1] This took place in the reign of Cadwallon, during his brief success against the Angles. Even after his defeat, the national spirit, Skene supposes, was kept alive by these popular lays, and by prophetic strains as to the future of the Cymry. In later years, the emigration of the Cymry to Wales brought these poems down from the North to South Wales, where, in still later times, the Arthurian Romance was added to them from Armorica.[2] From the days of Ida, then (to say nothing of earlier poetry), lays of battle, of joy and sorrow, of fates and legends, were being sung all over the country where the Cymry and the Northumbrian-English fought to and fro with varying success, lived together in the days of peace, and learned one another's language;[3] and I maintain that this body of popular Welsh poetry, with its peculiar poetic sentiment — its passion, colour, pathos, and surprise — had some influence, and perhaps a powerful one, on the English of Northumbria, and all the more, if the races were mingled, here and there at least, in marriage.

It was not only, however, with the Welsh, but with the

[1] During the sixth century the historical Arthur, according to Mr. Skene, fought against the Northern Saxons, who had settled in the district of the Forth and Clyde, the most of his twelve battles, the last of which was in 516. Poems and lays were made of these battles, and took a legendary shape in the seventh century. Taliessin, Aneurin, Llywarch Hen and a fourth poet "simul uno tempore in poemate Britannico claruerunt." They flourished then in the sixth century. Ida died in 559, and other wars were waged against his sons. Skene also declares that the great poem of the *Gododin* describes the terrible slaughter which took place in the wars between Oswiu and Penda, when thirty British kings fought on the side of Penda against Northumbria. He mentions other poems made in the seventh century concerning other battles between the Scots and Welsh. There was a great body of poetry, then, already built up among the Northern Welsh. (See Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales.*) If this be true, the English have no right to claim in Caedmon the first vernacular poet.

[2] *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, chs. xiii. xiv.

[3] The contact of the two races, both in war and peace, was continuous from the middle of the sixth century, and in war, as well as in peace, conterminous peoples learn to understand one another. Four kings of the North are described by the author of the *Genealogia* as warring against Hussa, son of Ida, King of Bernicia, who reigned from 567 to 574. Again against Theodric, who reigned over Bernicia from 580 to 587, and was also a son of Ida, Urien with his sons fought valiantly, and with varying fortune. It was these wars, Skene thinks, which were celebrated by Aneurin. In 603 the Scots and Welsh united to crush Bernicia, but Æthelfrith met them at Dawston in Liddesdale, and almost destroyed the whole army. It was after this, and owing to it, that Eadwine pushed his power up to the shores of the Firth of Forth. Oswald and Oswiu drove their conquests farther, and were overlords of Strathclyde. Ecgfrith continued this overlordship and subdued Cumberland, North Lancashire and Galloway. He increased then the Welsh admixture till he fell at Nechtansmere in 685. For nearly a hundred years then, we may say that there was a mingling in war and peace of the Cymry and the English, sufficient, at least, to enable the bards of both peoples to interchange their poetry.

Irish also that the Northumbrians were mingled. The Scots, as the Irish were called, had, in the fourth century, made a settlement in our *Scotland*, but returned to Ireland. Later on they came back and established themselves in the year 503 in Dalriada (Argyll). The first time we find them of importance in history is under Aedan, whom Columba crowned as King of Dalriada in Iona, and who, in 603, led the whole of the Celtic forces of the country against Æthelfrith. There is no need here to follow the fortunes of the Scot-kingdom. It was not till the middle of the ninth century that it took the lead again in the person of Kenneth MacAlpin; and not until fifty years afterwards that Pictland became Scotland.

The real Irish invasion which influenced English literature began with the landing of St. Columba in 563 on some islands off the west coast of Scotland, and his final choice of Hii, or Iona, for the site of a monastery, from which he evangelised the Picts of the mainland. He died in 597, the very year in which Augustine landed in the south of Britain, but he handed on to his followers his passionate and poetic temper. All those brought up in his monastery seem to have caught something of the mingled fire and tenderness of its founder,[1] and something also of his love for a free and wandering life; and the English who came for education to Iona, and those, too, who were taught in Northumbria their Christianity by missionaries from Iona, were influenced more or less deeply by the elements of Columba's character, especially those whose blood was at all mixed with Gaelic or Cymric families. Columba was, even in his faults, eminently Irish, and in no people, save the Jews, are race qualities so persistently continued from generation to generation, and so powerful in admixture with other peoples, as they are in the Irish. In no people, also, is the descent of character, independent of the descent through blood, more close and masterful than it is among the Irish. If it had not been so in their history, if they had oftener broken the tradition, they had been a wiser and a better folk. Columba, however, handed down to his successors, through the mastery of his character, his loves,

[1] These two elements united in Columba, and each tempering the other, were often divided in his spiritual descendants. The fire of Columba, without his tenderness, became fierceness in Corman, as he is called, who was so hard on the heathen Northumbrians that he returned to Iona; and somewhat petulant wrath in Colman, who, having lost his cause at Whitby, went back to Iona and then to Ireland. The tenderness of Columba was pre-eminent in Aidan, who also had eagerness enough. Both fire and gentleness were again united in Cuthbert, who of them all is most like Columba.

his likings, his temperament, his manner of life; and these, full of poetic and passionate feeling, were transferred to the English whom his monks evangelised. Cuthbert, who may have had Gael or Irish blood in him,[1] is a good example of the reproduction of Columba's manner of life and poetic feeling, of his love of solitude alternating with vagrant missions, but not of his power of versing or of his hot and passionate temper. Columba was himself a poet. Irish poems of his are believed to still exist, and if the song of regret for his exile from Ireland be really his, it makes it clear that he was a true lyrist. He loved well his own national poetry, and the story goes that one of the reasons of a certain visit he paid to Ireland was to defend the bardic order from a threatened exile from their country. We may be sure, then, that the love of poetry continued to be a tradition in the monastery, and the Irish poems of battle and law, and the great stories, like that of Lir and the children of Tuireann, were known and loved at Iona. Columba was not the man to throw away poetry which Baeda would, no doubt, have called profane. One of his greatest friends, Dallan Forgaill, who made a poem upon him, which is still preserved — the *Ambra Choluimcille*, Columba's Praises — was the chief of all the Irish bards. With all this poetry the English educated at Iona were likely to be acquainted.

Columba was equally fond of literary matters. His love for fine MSS. is said to have produced a civil war in Ireland; and the battle of the Psalter is still kept in mind by the shrine in which the Psalter is said to have been placed, and which is in the museum of the Royal Irish Academy. Not only, then, from Rome, but also from Iona, Northumbrian nobles learned to love a fine library. Aldfrith is much more likely to have derived his eagerness for collecting from Iona than from Wearmouth.

The passion for wandering at will, which carried the Irish missionaries over Europe, and which was reproduced in the Northumbrian pupils of Aidan; the love of country and the pathos of exile; the affection for animals, as if they were human beings, but needing more pity than men and women, were, all three, deep in the character of Columba, and are all

[1] It is my contention, that all over the country we call the Lowlands and the Border, English were mixed with Pict and Scot and Cymry, and that a Teutonic people, when mixed, are more likely to have the poetic temperament than when unmixed. The legend that Cuthbert's mother was an Irish slave — a princess, of course — may possibly contain the fact that he was of mixed blood.

represented in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The first is as much Teutonic as Celtic, but among the Teuton tribes it is more the characteristic of warriors than of monks. It was, however, a special mark of the Irish evangelisation of Northumbria; and the wandering gipsy life that Aidan and Cedda and Ceadda and Cuthbert led, roving, as fancy led them, from hamlet to hamlet over the wild country, was much more provocative of a poetic way of looking at nature and man than the systematic visitation of parishes, which the bishop, under the Roman rule, made of his diocese. The one was directed by impulse, the other by rule. The one was a life of adventure, the other was not.

The love of country and the passionate pain of exile belong also to all peoples, but they were felt by the Irish with peculiar intensity, certainly with far greater intensity than by the Teutonic tribes. I do not say that the frequent recurrence of this poetic subject in Northumbrian poetry was caused by the influence of the Irish, but I think that it was deepened and made more passionate by it.

The love of animals is a common element in monasticism, both Celtic and Roman, from Columba to Francis of Assisi. Pity, which lay at the root of the nature of Jesus, was extended to beasts and birds as well as men. This was not a special mark of the Teutonic genius under Christianity. It appears, but not often, in Northumbrian poetry. It has always been one of the marks, up to the present century, of English poetry in the North rather than of poetry in the South, and I venture to suggest that it grew among the Northumbrians and has continued in the Lowland poetry owing to the impulse, stronger and more poetic than elsewhere, which it received from Columba and his pupils, and which they handed on to the English whom they evangelised. The pretty legend which Adamnan tells of Columba and the Crane illustrates alike the passionate sorrow of exile and the love of animals of which I write, and the poetic intensity and charm with which the Celt surrounded them.

One morning Columba called to his side one of his monks, and said, "Go, seat yourself on the marge of the sea, on the western shore of our isle; and there you will see, coming from the north of Ireland, a voyaging crane, very weary and beaten by the storms, which will fall at your feet upon the beach. Lift it up with pity and carry it to the neighbouring hut, nourish it for three days of rest, and when it is refreshed and strong again, it will care no more to stay with us in exile, but will fly

back again to sweet Ireland, its dear country where it was born. I charge you thus with its care, for it comes from the land where I was born myself." So when the monk returned, having done as he was commanded, Columba said, "May God bless you, my son, since you have well cared for our exiled guest; you will see it return to its country in three days." And so it was. On the day named it rose from the earth, and when it had a moment sought its path through the sky, took its flight on a steady wing, straight for Ireland.

This temperament, combined with the emotions of Christianity, and acting on hearts in the first glow of conversion, came into Northumbria, and came attended by all the prestige which a royal friendship gave to the Irish missionaries, and with the support of the king's family and thegns. Oswald, with twelve companions, had taken refuge at Iona in 617. All the twelve, among whom were his brothers, were baptized and educated there, and shared, as they grew older, in the manner of life and in all the interests of the Irish monastery. Oswald, during seventeen years, from the age of thirteen, was steeped in the spirit which Columba had left behind. He learned Irish, and it is fair to infer that he heard and perhaps loved the great Irish poems. All his twelve companions had the same opportunities, and as they belonged to the royal family,[1] Irish poetry was not unknown to the Æthelings of Northumbria. When Oswald, in 634, came to the throne, he summoned his friends at Iona to send him missionaries. Aidan was soon by his side, and as Bishop of Lindisfarne converted Bernicia to the Christian faith, and restored Deira to the Christianity it had abandoned during the one shameless year of Osric's reign. The whole of Northumbria was united in the Christian faith by Iona. This was the bloodless invasion of the English by the Irish nature, and though its outward power departed in 664, its inward power lasted long. Oswin in Deira, Oswiu, when he made Northumbria into one kingdom, carried on the Irish influence.[2] The latter great king had been baptized and educated at Iona, and his earlier reign was marked, especially after the battle of Winwaed, by an increasing union of the Northumbrians with Irish life, literature, and learning. As Oswald had set up Lindisfarne and its subject monasteries on the model of Iona, so Oswiu set up Whitby on the same model. Whitby became the great educational centre of the

[1] Seven of them, including Oswald, were sons of Æthelfrith.

[2] I am sorry to seem to tell the same story over again. But the connection is different, and the repetition, I think, necessary for clearness.

southern part of Northumbria, and from its root sprang a number of related monasteries, all more or less directed by men who had received an Irish training and carried with them some Irish literature. From point to point of the coast, from Dunbar to Coldingham on St. Abb's Head, through Lindisfarne to Whitby, the Celtic monasteries civilised the folkland inward from the seashore. Over the interior, and indeed down into those provinces below Northumbria which were evangelised by the bishops trained at Lindisfarne and Whitby, and by missionaries like Fursey from Ireland, the monasteries were chiefly set up with the religious customs of Iona. It is said that forty-four monasteries were founded by Irishmen in England. But I am here only speaking of Northumbria and of the seventh century. In that century, and chiefly before the death of Caedmon, these were the chief monasteries influenced or founded by the Irish Church.

The first was at *Lindisfarne*, where Aidan set up his Bishop's seat, close to Bamborough, the royal castle of Oswald. It was the mother-church of the North — "the Iona," as Montalembert calls it, "of the Angles." South of it at the mouth of the Tyne, arose, over the murdered body of Oswin, the double monastery of *Tynemouth*. The nuns who came to pray at his tomb arrived from *Whitby*, which had already been established at the mouth of the Esk by Hild; and some years after Oswiu's death, and at the place where he was slain, Oswiu's wife, Eanfleda, built a monastery at *Gilling*, near to Richmond in Yorkshire. Its abbot was Trumhere, an Angle, but educated and ordained, says Baeda, by the Scots. Before this time, and during the life of Aidan, *Hartlepool*, the first of the monasteries presided over by an abbess in Northumbria, occupied a site on the coast between Tynemouth and Whitby. Inland, between York and Whitby, the son of Oswald, desiring to found a monastery where he might pray and be buried, called Cedda from Lindisfarne to choose its site. Cedda chose it in the roughest and wildest place among the hills, and set up *Lastingham* in accordance with the customs of Lindisfarne. North of Lindisfarne, other Irish monasteries had grown up. *Old Melrose*, an annex of Lindisfarne where young missionaries were educated, was built on a jutting arm of rock, round which swept the Tweed, about a league away from the Melrose we know so well. Still farther north, on a lonely cape in which the range of the Lammermuir ends, nearly five hundred feet above the sea, rose *Coldingham*, a double monastery. Ebba, sister of Oswald, was its founder; and

Aidan's successor, Finan of Lindisfarne, consecrated her. She had previously founded another monastery, *Ebbchester*, on the Derwent.

These all belonged to the Irish family of Lindisfarne. The greater part of Northumbria learnt through men whose spiritual centre was at Iona, the arts of life and industry, the reclaiming of the waste lands, agriculture, road and bridge making, the pleasures of social life, education, and literary culture, and learnt this new and exciting life through the Irish temper.[1] At the same time there was an incessant crossing and recrossing of Northumbrians to Ireland itself, and of Irish to Northumbria, for the purposes of learning and culture. The two countries drank in one another. The English found in Ireland a learning not to be found elsewhere in Europe. Not only religious, but literary and classic studies were pursued with eagerness, and developed. They kept historical annals in the monasteries. The arts were practised — architecture, graving, chiselling, embroidery, music, and poetry. Not only then from Iona, but also from Ireland itself, the Celtic influence poured into Northumbria in the seventh century.

It lessened, as we have seen, in the later years of Oswiu and under Ecgfrith; and after the Synod of Whitby it was doomed. When Aldfrith died in 705 we may say that the

[1] We must not, however, forget that the monastic power of the Roman Church was, after the first thirty years of Irish Christianity, growing up alongside of the Irish monasteries in the latter years of the seventh century. Northumbria was civilised by monks who derived their impulse from Rome as well as by monks who derived their impulse from Iona. Twenty-six years after Aidan took root at Lindisfarne, Ripon began the rivalry of the Latin with the Celtic monasticism. Its early history illustrates the struggle. It was founded by Alchfrith, son of Oswiu, and its first monks and its Abbot Eata came from the Irish monastery of Old Melrose. Alchfrith, under Wilfrid's influence, asked them in 661 to adopt the Roman mode of celebrating Easter. They refused and returned to Melrose. Wilfrid then took up the war which he carried to a successful issue at Whitby. He introduced the Benedictine rule at Ripon. Some years later he built, with great splendour, the Priory of Hexham, at the foot of the Roman wall, a little below the junction of the two branches of the Tyne, and not far from the place where Oswald planted the cross on the soil of Northumbria. Two other great monasteries were founded in the seventh century, and became, more than all the others, centres of learning. These were the united houses of *Wearmouth* and *Jarrow*, established close to the mouth of the Tyne by Benedict Biscop. Their chief glory, as nurseries of literature, belongs to the next century, but Wearmouth was founded when Caedmon was singing at Whitby, and Jarrow only two years after his death. These Latin monasteries lived on terms of mutual respect and tolerance with the Celtic. When the question of Easter was settled they remained in harmony, interchanging devotional thought and feeling. We must not forget this monastic mingling of Celtic and Latin influences in estimating the forces which, in the seventh century, started the literature of Northumbria.

Irish influence, which had lasted in full power from the advent of Aidan to the Synod of Whitby, from 635 to 664, began to die. It still continued for forty years, till all who had been trained by Lindisfarne and Whitby had passed away. It ran a career, then, of about seventy years. During that time the Irish character, the passion, impulsiveness and tenderness of Columba; some at least of the Irish poetry, with its elements of colour, romance, invention, and charm, penetrated the Northumbrians, and we can scarcely avoid thinking that this was one of the causes which made Northumbria more creative of poetry than the rest of England, especially when we remember that the Celtic impulse came to the English charged with all the new emotions of Christianity.[1]

One other influence, creative of poetry, or fostering a poetic temper, was the natural scenery of Northumbria. It was of a wilder, more romantic type than any that existed below the Humber. The wood and wild-land of Mercia and Wessex, even the fens, or the great downs which looked on the Channel, are not to us so instinct with that natural mystery which troubles the imagination of those who make and love poetry as the lonely, rolling moors which stretch, desolate even to this day, from Cumberland to the Tweed in rig and flow. There is scarcely a valley in their deep recesses which has not its own personality, which does not make its own impression; and the rivers which are born in their mosses, and which cleave their way to the sea, are fierce and tawny as a tiger. The hills, becoming softer as they pass northward, make the view seen by one who stands on the ridge of the Roman wall, mysteriously wide and far, and the vast but low roof of sky which broods above them is fruitful of swirling mists, of wild sunsets, and wilder storms. This land has always been the

[1] I place only in a note another conjecture which may have a little weight. We need to remember, in estimating the influences which bore upon Northumbria before Caedmon, that during the whole reign of Penda, from 626 to 655, a heathen influence poured into the Northern kingdom from Mercia, and kept up, among those who clung to the old ways, the thoughts and customs and war-songs of the heathen forefathers of the English. It is probable that the Teutonic poetry was the better preserved in Northumbria from its having associated for a long time with Englishmen who remained Pagans after the Northumbrians had become Christian, and whom they themselves evangelised. Of course this suggestion would have but little value if there had not existed in Northumbria a literary class who loved poetry, and who did not think that profane poetry of war, adventure, and legend was wrong for a Christian man to hear and sing. But such a class did exist, I think, in the Irish monks and in those trained by them. They had their own legends, lays, and adventures; and they would cherish lays similar to those out of which *Beowulf* was composed. They would not reduce them to writing, but they would sing them and keep them, and give them vogue.

home of rude and pathetic ballads of love and war and superstition; and in the seventh century there was not an inch of the ground which had not been fought over by Cymry and Angle, by Scots and Picts. Battle lays had been sung over it from Carlisle to Bamborough, monastic chants from Tynemouth to Lindisfarne and Coldingham; and Walter Scott, when he made the whole of it, and Liddesdale in particular, the native land of romance, but revived that which had filled it more than a thousand years before. The impression the whole country made — with the ruined wall of the Romans, that "work of giants," added to create a new element of awe — must have stirred the poetic temperament in that mixed people. It stirs it now in us, and such impressions have no time.

But the actual poetry which we have in Caedmon, in the books of Exeter and Vercelli, and, perhaps, in *Beowulf*, also, does not belong, I think, to the inland moorland, but to the coast. The sea, as I have already shown, is the one constant natural object in these poems; and a large number of the monastic centres of the seventh century were situated on the sea. Each sat on its promontory "stern and wild,"

Meet nurse for a poetic child.

They looked alike on the solemn moorland and on the roaring sea. From Coldingham, from Lindisfarne, from Tynemouth and Whitby, the moors, divided by brown and rushing streams, stretched inland league after league, and filled with their mystery the hearts of Angle and of Scot. On the other side was their daily companion, the changing sea. The dwellers at Coldingham heard its fierce billows roar more than 400 feet below their gray and lofty cape. Who that has seen Tynemouth or Lindisfarne can ever forget the emotion of loneliness which filled him with the thought of God as he looked from the wild grass headlands over the barren deep? The wanderer, on the shore where Bamborough stretches forth its length on the dyke of basalt, sees the white waves leap over the isles of Farne, and feels as Cynewulf felt when he saw the rocks "unmoved abide the waves, the lightning, and the hail." There is not a more savage coast in England than that which rises and dips from headland to valley — its jutting jaws of ship-devouring rock opening out to sea — as we voyage from Hartlepool to Whitby. All the nameless passion of the sea and the stormy sky, of the loud winds and the white horses of the deep, of the black clouds and the red

lightning entered day by day into the life of those who watched the business and fury of the elements from the edges of the cliffs; and the watchers were men and women who had received the impress of the sea and its love, not only from their Teutonic forefathers, but from the Irish, whose tales are full of the great waters, and who were as much children of the billows as Beowulf and his men. The coracle was not to be compared in size and safety to a dragon ship, but it was handled with as great dexterity, and it needed greater sea audacity. Not only then from one side, but from two, the Northumbrians were prepared to receive the poetic impulse of the sea.

These are the suggestions which I make in answer to the question why poetry prevailed in Northumbria more than elsewhere in England; and, in making them, I have confined myself to the seventh century, that is, to the century in which Christian poetry was born in the soul of Caedmon, and sung on the cliff of Whitby.

Nearly all these influences bore on Caedmon and nourished his genius. That genius was silent for a long time; it was only when well on in years that he began to sing. But this was natural enough. The beginner of a new form of poetry in times which have no written literature and no models, is not likely to begin early. But all the more he drinks in for years, into a soul which is naturally receptive, the impulses which come to him from human affairs and human nature, from circumstances, and from the natural world; and if we say that Caedmon was about fifty when he began to make verse, and choose 670 for the date of his first poem, he began to receive these impulses about the year 630, when he would be ten years old, and when Eadwine was still King. Where he was then living we cannot tell; but he was probably a heathen, for it was only in 627 that Eadwine was baptized. In 658 Hild set up the monastery at Whitby, and as Caedmon was a secular servant of the monastery, we may well conjecture that he belonged to the little fishing hamlet which lay at the foot of the cliff, or that he accompanied Hild as a retainer from Hartlepool. About the age of forty, the influences of which I speak began more directly to bear upon him. Hild, the Abbess of his home, was of the royal stock of Deira, and grandniece of the great King Eadwine, by whose side, when she was a girl of thirteen, she was baptized by Paullinus. Many a time Caedmon must have heard that story told. Nor was this all that Caedmon heard of the glory of Eadwine, for on a

certain day he may have seen the procession and heard the service which attended the reburial at Whitby of the body of Eadwine;[1] and this tomb made for a time Whitby the Westminster Abbey of Northumbria. He saw in 670 Oswiu laid low in the same church, and perhaps his wife Eanfleda. Over the tombs of these great princes shone into Caedmon's eyes the national glory of Northumbria. Still deeper was probably the impression made by the continual presence of Ælfleda, whose life in the monastery was bound up with the great victory of Winwaed, when Penda, the scourge of Northumbria, was at last slain and Oswald avenged. The story of her dedication by her father Oswiu to Christ and her being given to Hild at Hartlepool, must have been told again and again to Caedmon. She was twenty years old when he began to write, and she listened to his first song. Nor was this all; Oswiu and the princes of Northumbria, were frequently at Whitby, and with them may have come at one time or another Ecgfrith, who in 670 came to the throne of England when Caedmon ascended the throne of Poetry.

This was enough to fill his soul with the war-like glory of his country, but its spiritual glory also came upon him. His mistress had been baptized by Paullinus; he probably had seen Aidan face to face, for Aidan died only twenty years before Caedmon began to sing, and Aidan had been Hild's father in the Lord. Many were the monks and travellers who came to Whitby from Lindisfarne, and all the story of Oswald and Aidan's companionship in the evangelisation of Northumbria was doubtless common talk at Whitby. After 664 he may have seen the angel face of Cuthbert, the new Prior of Lindisfarne, who for twelve years, before his retirement to Farne, went on frequent missionary journeys through Northumbria, and whose death took place only seven years after the death of Caedmon. It is interesting to think that Cuthbert may have sung the verses of Caedmon. The school of the monastery of monks under Hild contained, while Caedmon was yet alive, five men who came to be bishops — Bosa to be Bishop of Deira, with his See at York; Ætla, whom Baeda makes Bishop of Dorchester, and who is probably the same as Hedda, who fixed the West Saxon See at Winchester; Oftfor, the second Bishop of Worcester; John of Beverley, who brought to Whitby news of the new school of Canterbury and of Theo-

[1] Eadwine was slain in 633. His head was brought to York and buried there. His body was laid (Baeda, *H. E.* 24) at Whitby — when exactly I do not know, but perhaps at the same time when Oswiu was buried there in 670.

dore and Hadrian; and Wilfrid II., who became Bishop of York; all of them, save the last, men of original thought and of power in affairs. At many points then the spiritual glory of Northumbria bore upon the daily life of Caedmon. There was one great event, moreover, which happened at Whitby while he was alive, in which the splendour of a great ceremony brought together the kingly race of Northumbria, the noble memories of the Celtic Church, and the intellectual power, the unity and the awe of Rome. It is almost certain that Caedmon saw the Synod of Whitby in 664. King Oswiu came there with his son Alchfrith, and his daughter Ælfleda came from the monastery to meet him. Colman of Lindisfarne with his Irish clerks, Hild and her people and the venerable Cedda represented the evangelisers of Northumbria. Wilfrid, with Agilberht, Bishop of the West Saxons; Romanus, chaplain of Eanfleda, Oswiu's wife; and James the Deacon, one of the companions of Paullinus, in whom men saw the image of the first Latin mission so sadly brought to misfortune thirty years before, represented the over-mastering power of Rome. It was a sight to be forever remembered, even by a monastic servant whose genius was as yet unawakened; nor could any one who heard Wilfrid — and the Synod may have been held in the open air — speaking English "with a sweet, soft eloquence," forget the image of that keen and passionate partizan. These things would work even on a stupid soul; they would certainly work on one in whom abode, though as yet in slumber, the spark of genius.

The mixture of races in Northumbria on which I have dwelt was not, I should think, personally represented in Caedmon. It is not likely that the family of one who lived in the midst of the east coast of Deira had anything to do with Cymry or Pict or Irish. But, of course, the whole influence of the Irish spirit, thrilling with the emotions of Christianity, was continually around him. It was the spiritual air that he breathed. Lastly, to finish this application, the natural scenery which surrounded him, the valley of the Esk, on whose sides he probably lived, the great cliffs, the billowy sea, the vast sky seen from the heights over the ocean, played incessantly upon him. They did not work on him as vitally as they did on Cynewulf, but they had their power.

It may be said that too much is made of this. We cannot think that Caedmon, who was, as they say, "a herdsman," and quite uneducated, derived much good from those influences, or drank them in at all. But it does not follow that he was

wholly uneducated. He had been submitted to the monastic teaching, as all Hild's dependents were, and had received enough to stir his intellect and emotion. An elaborate education unmakes rather than makes a poet. Chaucer, Shakspere, Spenser, Wordsworth, Burns, Keats, Byron, Shelley, were not great scholars, and the best of them all had no education at all save what came in the air to him. I have sometimes wished that Milton had not been so good a scholar. Burns followed the plough along the mountain side, and may be set side by side with Caedmon who tended the horses on the night that a Divine One spoke to him. Nor does it follow, that because Baeda says that he had the care of the cattle that night, that he was a herdsman at all. He was one of the secular attendants on the monastery, and may have been as good a gentleman as Halbert Glendinning. When Baeda says "on that night" it seems as if it were not Caedmon's regular habit to look after the cattle; but that he took it in his turn. But even if he were a herdsman, it is as good a beginning for English poetry to have Caedmon a herdsman as it was for Hebrew poetry to have David a shepherd. Whatever the man was, he had genius and, sleeping long, it awoke at last. How it awoke, and what it produced, either of itself, or in the hands of those whom it influenced, is now our business.

CHAPTER XV

CAEDMON

Caedmon, as he is called, is the first Englishman whose name we know who wrote poetry in our island of England; and the first to embody in verse the new passions and ideas which Christianity had brought into England. The date of his birth is unknown, but Baeda tells us that he died in 680, and as he began to write when he was well forward in years, his poem is loosely dated about 670. Hild had been some time at Streoneshalh[1] when he sang his first song, for we are certain that her abbacy began in 658. It ended in 680. Between these twenty-two years was laid the first stone of that majestic temple of English Poetry within whose apse, row after row, the great figures of the poets of England have taken their seats, one after another, for more than 1200 years.

We knew of Caedmon's life and work from Baeda, but nothing more was known of his verse to modern England until the time of Milton. A similar chance to that which gave us our single manuscript of *Beowulf* and *Judith* gave us our single copy of the set of poems which has been connected with the

[1] *Streones-halh.* Baeda translates this "the bay of the Beacon," and it has been taken to mean that there was a light of some kind either on the cliff or at the entrance of the bay. But *streon* is not an English word, or this is the only place where it occurs; and *healh* or *halh* is a word of doubtful meaning, and when it seems to occur in the charters has never the meaning of angle, or corner or bay. Baeda, however, may be supposed to know of what he was writing, and it is most probable — as Mr. Gollancz has suggested to me — that Streoneshalh is a local name which the English found already given to the place, and that this name meant Beacon-bay.

The origin of the name Whitby, "the white town," which the Danes gave to the place, is as obscure as that of Streoneshalh. It could not be called so from the colour of the cliffs, which are of dark lias shale. But the little harbour may have been surrounded by fishermen's dwellings, whitened with lime, and such a village would gleam brightly against the darkness of the cliff. I do not know whether the English whitened their wooden huts, but this is the only conjecture I can make to fit in with the Danish name; unless we were to imagine that *White* or *Hwit* was the name of the Dane who led the raid against the place, or of some other who settled there in after days.

name of Caedmon. Archbishop Ussher, hunting in England for books and manuscripts with which to enrich the library of Trinity College, Dublin, found this manuscript and gave it to Francis Dujon, a scholar of Leyden, who is known in literature as Junius, and from whom the manuscript derives its name of the *Junian Caedmon.* Junius, who was a great lover of Anglo-Saxon, was then librarian to Lord Arundel, and when he left for the Continent in 1650, took care to have the manuscript printed at Amsterdam. He published it as the work of Caedmon,[1] and soon afterwards brought it back to England, where it finally found a home in the Bodleian. It is a small folio of 229 pages divided by a difference of handwriting into two parts. The first part, said to be in fine handwriting of the tenth century, is illustrated with rude pictures, and contains the *Genesis, Exodus,* and *Daniel.* The second part, in different and perhaps more modern handwriting, contains the poem to the several subjects of which the name of *Christ and Satan* has been given. It includes verses on the Fall of the Rebel Angels, the Harrowing of Hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Last Judgment, and the Temptation.

Since the time of Junius critics have found in the separate parts of this manuscript so many various elements, and so much diversity of style, that they not only allot different writers to these separate parts, but also hesitate to attribute any one part to Caedmon. Indeed some have declared that Caedmon did not write a single line of it. It would be wearisome to give an account of all the theories and conjectures made about the authorship of this set of poems. They will be found collected with admirable skill by Wülker in his *Grundriss für Geschichte der Angelsächsischen Literatur.* The two things which interest us most are first, whether we may impute any part of the poems we have to Caedmon, the monk of Whitby of whom Baeda tells the story; and secondly, the poetry itself. With regard to the first, there is no doubt a general correspondence between the lines which stand now at the beginning of the *Genesis* and the words which Baeda says Caedmon sang, and of which he gives the sense in Latin. There is, moreover, a correspondence between the subjects of which Baeda says the poet sang and the subjects treated of in the Junian Manuscript; and these two correspondences make it somewhat probable that we have in this manuscript, along

[1] "Finding a substantial agreement between the first lines of the MS. and the Latin abstract which Baeda made of the verses Caedmon sang in his dream," he assumes that the whole set of poems were by Caedmon.

with poems written by other persons, some at least of the verses of Caedmon. If so, we must also add that they have suffered from interpolations and corruptions, and from their translation out of the Northumbrian into a West Saxon dialect. On the whole I am inclined to hope that we may have the pleasure of binding up the story in Baeda with some of the poems we possess; and if the severe Muse of History permit this to us, it is a great gain to sentiment. But the authorship of the several poems shall be discussed as we come to them, one after another. Before I enter on that task I must say something about Milton and Caedmon, and tell the story of Caedmon himself as it is given by Baeda.

When Junius brought the printed book back to England he showed it, no doubt, to his literary friends. One of these friends was Milton, and certain resemblances on which, in my opinion, too much stress has been laid, make it a curious question as to whether Milton had Caedmon's work before him when he was writing *Paradise Lost*. It is most probable that Junius translated the poem to Milton. Milton knew his Baeda well, and it would be strange if he were not enough interested in the story of Caedmon, his first predecessor in the art of poetry, to be eager to hear what he was supposed to have written concerning Milton's own subjects of the fall of the rebel angels and of man. It is also probable that Milton, who borrowed thoughts from every side for his Epic, retained in his ear some of the more vivid expressions of the poem Junius translated to him; that their spirit entered into him and took a Miltonic form in scattered places of his poem.[1] But the resemblances are slight, and less important than they would be if the subject were any other than that of the Fall of Man. We must remember that this subject had been treated of a hundred times in the mysteries and miracle plays; that dramas and poems had been written on it in every literature in Europe; that a number of ideas and phrases and descriptions used in writing of it had become conventional; and that the lines on which it was treated, and on which the characters of Satan, Adam, and Eve were drawn were similar through all this European work, if not frequently the same. The originality of Milton's poem does not lie in the subject or in its general treatment, but in the form of it and the poetry; and these, which are the main matters, are, in Milton's hands, as far superior to all the efforts of his predecessors as the Zeus of Pheidias was to all other images of the God.

[1] I have noted hereafter, in their proper place, extracts from Milton which resemble passages in the *Genesis*.

All we can say then is, that Milton had, it is likely, heard the *Genesis* translated to him, and that he got from the writer a suggestion or a phrase, here and there, which he used as he would use a suggestion or a phrase from Homer or Virgil, from Dante or Spenser. But, nevertheless, we may well imagine the romantic interest the blind old man would have when, sitting in some summer parlour, he listened to the song, a thousand years old, which the first poet of his race had sung concerning his own subject of "Man's first disobedience."

The story of Caedmon, as Milton read it in Baeda, is well known, but it will bear repetition; and it should be the first lesson taught to every English child, for when the glory of England's wealth, science, and arms has become but a subject for an historical essay, her poetry will still inspire and console mankind. Empires die, but Poetry lives on, and the story of the origin of English song in this land is the foremost of all English stories. It begins in the Abbey of Whitby. Hild, the Abbess, under whose rule Caedmon wrote, had already lived thirty-three years with great nobleness, when she took on her the monastic life. Aidan placed her at this age on the banks of the Wear, and then transferred her to Hartlepool. Nine years afterwards, and on the same wild coast, she established the double Monastery of Streoneshalh, and dedicated it to St. Peter. Here, under this famous and beloved woman, Caedmon lived, attached in a secular habit to the monastery. It was not till he was well advanced in years that he learned anything of the art of poetry, wherefore, whenever at feasts it was agreed, for the sake of mirth, that all should sing in turn and the harp came towards him, he rose from the table and returned to his house. One evening, having done this, he went to the stables, for the care of the cattle had been for that night entrusted to him, and as he slept one stood by him, saluted him, and called him by his name, "Caedmon, sing me something." He answered, "I know not how to sing, and for this cause I left the feast, because I could not sing." Then the other who talked with him said, "All the same, you have to sing for me." — "What shall I sing?" Caedmon answered. "Sing," said the other, "the beginning of things created." Whereupon he immediately began to sing in praise of God, the world's upbuilder, verses which he had not heard before, and of which this is the sense:[1] "Now

[1] We have at the end of an old MS. of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* a Northumbrian version of this dream-song of Caedmon. Here it is, and it is per-

must we praise the maker of the celestial kingdom, the power and counsel of the Creator, the deeds of the Father of glory, how He, since He is the Eternal God, was the beginner of all wonders, who first, Omnipotent Guardian of the human kind, made for the sons of men Heaven for their roof, and then the Earth." This is the sense but not the order of the words as he sang them in his sleep.[1] Then awaking he remembered what, sleeping, he had sung, and soon added more words in the same fashion in song worthy of the Deity.[2]

In the morning he came to the town reeve and told him what gift he had received, who forthwith led him to the Abbess, and made that known to her. Then she ordered him in the presence of many learned men to tell the dream and sing the verses, that by the judgment of all it might be approved what and whence this was; and it seemed to all that heavenly grace had been given to him by our Lord.

Then they told him some holy history and words of godly lore, and bade him, if he could, turn these into the melody of song. Returning in the morning, he sang to them in excellent verse what had been bidden him. Therefore the Abbess began to make much of and to love the grace of God in the man,[3] and exhorted him to forsake the secular and to take to the monastic habit, which being done, she made him a companion of the

haps the very form of the hymn which Ælfred, in the translation he made of Baeda, transferred into his own dialect—

Nû scylun hergan hefaenrîces uard,
Metudaes maecti end his môdgidanc
Werc uuldurfadur sue he uundra gihuaes
Eci dryctin or astelidae.
Hae aerist scop aelda barnum
Heben til hrofe haleg scepen
Tha middungeard moncynnaes uard
Eci dryctin aefter tiadae
Firum foldu, frea allmectig.

Most persons have held that we have in these lines the exact words, or nearly so, of this first hymn of the poet; others, however, maintain that they are not original, but a translation into Northumbrian of Baeda's Latin; and, for my own part, their short abrupt rhythm suggests a late rather than an early date.

[1] The *order* of which Baeda speaks is the rhythmical order, for he adds, "neque possunt carmina, quamvis optime composita, ex alia in aliam linguam ad verbum sine detrimento sui decoris ac dignitatis transferri."

[2] There is a Norse legend concerning Halbiorn, a goat-herd, which has some resemblance to this story, and the same kind of tale is told of many poets, of Hesiod, for example. A similar gift of song in sleep is told of the writer of the *Heliand* but this is probably taken from the story in Baeda. There is no reason to doubt of the person of Caedmon. Baeda lived not far off from Whitby. He was born in 673, and Caedmon died in 680. He gives a free Latin translation of Caedmon's hymn, and an Index of his work. He knew the poems.

[3] I have introduced here and there into Baeda's account a few expressions added by Ælfred in his translation of this story.

brethren in the monastery, and ordered him to be taught the whole series of sacred history. Thus Caedmon, meditating within himself all that he had heard, and, like a clean animal ruminating, turned it into the sweetest verse; and his song and his verses were so winsome to hear that his teachers themselves learned from his mouth. He sang the Creation of the world and the Origin of man, and all the history of Genesis, and of the departure of Israel from Egypt and the entrance into the land of promise, and of many other stories in the sacred Scriptures, and of the Incarnation of the Lord and of His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and of the doctrine of the Apostles. And of the terror of future judgment and the horror of hell, and of the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom he made many songs, and others also of the divine benefits and judgments, — in all which he had care to lead men away from the love of ill-doing, and to stir them to the love of good deeds. For he was a very devout man, humble and subject to regular discipline, but inflamed with a fervent heat of zeal against those who were otherwise minded, wherefore he brought his life to a fair end. For, when the time of his departure grew near, he was burdened for fourteen days with bodily infirmity, but his weakness grew so slowly upon him that he could both speak and walk. But on the night on which he was to depart he went to the house where those likely to die were carried, and desired a place where he might rest to be made ready for him. When it was past midnight, having talked in a joyful fashion with those who were there, he asked whether they had the Eucharist nigh at hand. "What need of the Eucharist," they answered, "for you are not likely to die, since you talk as merrily with us as if you were in good health?" — "But," he replied, "bring me the Eucharist;" and having asked them if they were all in charity with him, and saying, "I am in charity, my children, with all the servants of God," he strengthened himself with the heavenly viaticum and made ready for the other life. Then he asked how near the time was when the brothers should sing the Nocturns. "It is not far off," they said. "Well," he replied, "let us wait that hour," and signing himself with the sign of the Cross, he laid his head upon the pillow, and, falling into a slumber, so ended his life in silence.[1] Thus, as he had served God with a pure and simple mind, and with tranquil devotion,

[1] In the same silent way, in sleep, Milton departed.

so also he left the world with as tranquil a death; and the tongue which had wrought so many health-bearing words in the Creator's praise was silent also with God's praise, and signing himself with the Cross, commended his spirit into His hands; and he seemed, indeed, to have had foreknowledge of his death. Others after him tried, says Baeda in another place, to make religious poems in the English nation, but none could compare with him; for he learnt the art of song not from men, nor of man came it, but divinely aided, he received that gift. Thus he inspired others to write after him; nevertheless "sweet and humble," said Baeda, "was his poetry; no trivial or vain song came from his lips." Undisturbed by any previous making of lighter poetry, he came fresh to the work of Christianising English song. It was a great step to make. He built the chariot in which all the new religious emotions of England could now drive along; and these emotions and their thoughts were ideal. The aim of his verse, wrote Baeda, was "to stir men to despise the world and to aspire to Heaven." It could not then have been mere paraphrase; paraphrase does not stir and kindle the heart of men. It was felt that in his fresh simplicity, in the native English grace of God in the man, there was an inspiration, to which his unlearned condition, perhaps his peasant origin, added a wonder and a charm.

The place where this piety of our forefathers, like that of Greece, derived from God Himself the art of song, was worthy to be the cradle of English poetry. That poetry has again and again rejoiced in the sea, and the sea almost surrounds the height of Whitby. Nor has our poetry neglected the spirit of the wild moorland or the river glens; and the moors and stream-scooped vales are companions of the cliffs of Whitby. The Esk, which waters the foundations of the two headlands between which Whitby lies, comes down through one of these wooded valleys to the harbour and the sea. About its banks, and on the steep hillsides above it, grew up the old sea-going town. A few fishermen's huts may have grown into a town in the time of Hild; and if Streoneshalh be a local British name, there was a little hamlet in the bay before she came.

Above the houses of this scattered town, fringing the beach, a broad paved road soon led to the upper part of the cliff, — that sharply-rising grassy bluff on the top of which now stands the church of St. Mary, with its long procession of tombstones to those drowned at sea. This slope was probably dotted, in the time of Hild, with small oratories and cells,

where monks, and perhaps nuns lived alone, apart from the main building of the monastery, and it is likely that these oratories were still there at the time of the Danish raid. Higher up, on the platform of the cliff, just where it began to climb from the western moor, stood the great hall of the monastery itself, built originally of wood and thatched[1] with reeds. Around it rose the houses of the Abbess and her officers, of the monks, and, divided from them, of the nuns — the refectories, the Abbey church, the guest-chambers, the dwellings of the stewards and the other secular attendants of a great monastery, the stables and all the necessary outbuildings. The Danes, about two hundred years after the time of Hild,[2] came down the valley of the Esk from York, and, leaping up the path, stormed and burnt to the ground this hive of human life, plundered it of all its goods, slew every one of its indwellers, and crossed the moor by the light of the blazing beacon they had kindled. In that condition the place continued for more than two hundred years, when Reinfrid, as the story goes, one of the knights William sent to subdue the rising in the North, passed by the spot, and seeing the devastation of this place of God, wept for the ruin, and swore that he would repair the worship and the temple of the Lord. Returning from the North, he entered the monastic school at Evesham, and settled at Whitby.[3] There he built a church around which a monastery grew of which he became Prior. After many trials, the place grew into wealth and importance, and finally the abbey, whose tall and noble ruins we now see, was built. Standing, as one looks upwards from the town, on the very ridge of the long cliff, it dominates the vale below, and is seen sharp and dark against the evening sky. The austere Early English of its

[1] When Baeda tells us that Finan built a church in the Isle of Lindisfarne after the death of Aidan, he adds, "he built it not of stone but of hewn oak, and covered it with reeds — after the manner of the Scots" (*E. H.* Bk. iii. ch. xxv.). The "reeds" were probably the tall *bent* which grows all over the sand-dunes of the Northumbrian coast, and which blows back from the top of the hillocks like hair tossed in the wind. All round Bamborough and Holy Island this grass grows; the *bent* does not grow at Whitby, and Hild thatched her monastic buildings with straw, or reeds from the moorland pools.

[2] Of course Streoneshalh may have been destroyed by some roving Viking who sailed his ships into the bay; but there is no evidence of this, and it is more likely that it perished in the systematic ravaging of the monasteries which was carried out from York in 868.

[3] This is a pleasant story, but it is problematical. Reinfrid, or Regenfrith, was apparently a lay brother of Evesham, and with Ealdwine, prior of Winchcombe, and Ælfwine, set out on foot to revive religion in the North, about 1071. They repaired the church at Jarrow, and Regenfrith after a time went down from Jarrow to Whitby. He may have been a soldier; it does not follow that he was a Norman. Like Ealdwine and Ælfwine, his name is really English.

windows and pillars suits with the severity of its site, and is scarcely infringed on by the Decorated doorway at the west end, and by some Decorated windows. As we rest among its heaps of fallen wall and tower, we hear the sea roaring below the cliff, and the sound fills the aisle like the chanting of a solemn mass. We think then that this deep organ note struck on the ears of Hild twelve hundred years ago, and that the first chant of English poetry was made to its grave and mighty music; and so deep is the impression of antiquity when we are thus forced to look back over the continuous stream of English poetry that we seem, when we leave the eastern end of the abbey, to be walking with Caedmon himself, among his own cattle, over the long rank grass, to the outjutting point of the headland, which looks due north over the sea. A few minutes brings us to the edge. Three hundred feet below the dash of breakers is heard as they strike into the black caverns at the base of the cliff. The tumultuous northern sea lies outspread before us. Over these stormy waters came our Angle forefathers, bringing with them the poem of *Beowulf*. Over them Caedmon looked at evening as he framed the verse in which he sang the flood of Noah. Over them came the fierce ships of the Northmen, first to plunder, then to settle; and on them, so constant is the lowlier life of men, the fishing-boats have won their spoil and drifted into Whitby with the tide for more than a thousand years. A poetry which has always loved religion, and religion in its sterner and more solemn forms, which has been passionate with adventure, which has breathed with ease the airs of war, which has occupied with joy the ocean, and which has never, from the lowly peasant who began it to Chaucer, Shakspere, Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson, neglected to sing of the simple life of the hamlet, could scarcely have had a fitter birthplace.

Nor was the spot devoid of other elements of poetry. Behind Hild, as she walked on her high cliff at night, the moors stretched away; and though she did not people them with heathen creatures of the mist like Grendel, she saw in the foldings of the clouds the rebel angels whom Caedmon drew, and the demons whom Cynewulf sang of as torturing Guthlac on his solitary hill. When she looked up to the heavens and beheld the stars — and keenly they shine on Whitby — or the aurora lights to the North, she seemed to see the homes of angels, and their choirs descend to bring on high the souls of saints that she knew to be in hermitage and nigh to death. And when storm was on the sea, and the light of the beacon

she may have set up on the cliff, streamed over her head, and she saw the dim gleam of other lights which monks or nuns from her monastery had established in their cells along the coast, and heard over the roaring of the waves the cries of seamen shipwrecked in the bay below, she heard also, in the wind and the scream of the billows and the birds, the crying of such demons as Cuthbert put to flight from the rocky solitude of Farne. These things are no conjecture. All early English poetry is full of such thoughts, and they have entered into all later poetry. Not once, but many times in English verse

> The fishers have heard the water sprite,
> Whose screams forbode that wreck is nigh.

Cynewulf saw the cloud-spirits of the rain and thunder stalking through the storm, and shooting their weapons. Baeda tells many a story of the celestial visitants seen at night descending from the stars; of the radiance of their ascending which St. Begu saw from Hackness — a cell founded by Hild — on the very night when the soul of the great Abbess passed away; of the pillars of pure light that rose above the dead bodies of the saints to the roof of heaven, and were seen far and wide over England. The nature-myth became religious, as much a part of the daily thoughts and visions of Christian as it had been of heathen life.

The same things pervade the poem of *Genesis*, the groundwork of which was at least done by Caedmon. The winds, and especially the north-east wind, which sends in so fierce a sea on Whitby, bear frost and bitter cold into the Hell of the *Genesis*.[1] The feeling of the writer of the *Exodus* (one of the school of Caedmon) for the sea in tempest breaks forth again and again in the poem, in long leaping lines, which follow one another like the billows of the Northern Ocean. When Abraham in the *Genesis* ascends the "steep downs till he comes to the ring of the highland," and passes over the wolds to build the bale fire for Isaac, it may well be the moors westward of Whitby which the poet places in his verse; and when God speaks to Abraham of the stars to which He compares his descendants for multitude, He speaks of them as Caedmon saw them from the height of the abbey cliff.[2]

[1] Then in early morning comes an Eastern wind,
And a fierce-cold frost. — *Genesis*, l. 315.

The passage is, however, in a part of the *Genesis* which, it is said, was not written by Caedmon.

[2] Look upon the Heaven; tell its high-adornments,
Clustered stars of sky! These in splendour now

In such scenery the first English poem grew up, and, to complete the picture, we may imagine the long hall of the monastery at night filled with abbess or prior, monk and nun, with lay brethren and servants, with thegns and churls and merchants seeking hospitality, among the rest perhaps King Ecgfrith seated near his sister Ælfleda, — for "kings and princes asked and received advice from Hild," — with bishops and saintly men who came to visit the place where they had been brought up, — all gathered together, on each side of the huge fires, listening to Caedmon as he sang to them the paraphrase of the portion of Scripture allotted to him in the morning. Outside, the dark wind blew and shook the walls, and in the pauses of the harp and song the roar of the waves lent their deep tone to exalt the description of the Flood, which we may fairly give to Caedmon. We may well imagine how they listened to the noise of the wind and rain and the thunder of the deep when they heard these lines —

Then sent forth the Lord
Heavy rain from heaven ; eke he hugely let
All the welling burns on the world throng in
Out of every earth-vein ; let the ocean-streams,
Swarthy, sound aloud ! Then upstepped the sea
O'er the shore-stead walls ! Strong was he and wroth
Who the waters wielded, who with his wan wave
Cloaked and covered then all the sinful children
Of this middle-earth. *Genesis*, l. 1371.

It may be that this passage, as I said, is by Caedmon himself; and, if so, it illustrates how, at times, his poetic work arose above mere paraphrase. Whenever he is stirred by his subject, as when he describes the Creation, the Flood, the war of Abraham with the Kings of the East, and the sacrifice of Isaac, his style lifts, his metrical movement becomes full and varied, his vision of the thing clear, his expansion of his matter full of touches which, by belonging to the spirit and manners of his time, quicken his work into reality.

Far through space are scattering their excelling loveliness!
Brightly are they beaming over the broad sea. — *Genesis*, l. 2189.

I do not say that Caedmon wrote these lines, though it is possible. But they were written by one of his school, if not by him. And the writer may well have lived at Whitby. He certainly, I think, wrote upon the coast. I may add that to translate *rûme* "far through space" is perhaps more than I ought to do. "Far and wide," with the sense of "plenteousness" added to it, is the exact meaning.

CHAPTER XVI

"GENESIS A"

Genesis A, of which this chapter gives an account, and which we may with some probability allot, at least in part, to Caedmon, consists of the first 234 lines of the *Genesis*, and then of the lines from 852 to the close. The lines from 235 to 851 contain a second account of the Fall of man, and are called *Genesis B*. I shall treat them separately in the next chapter.

Genesis A begins with an ascription of praise to the glorious King, the Guard of the skies, which resembles the words of the hymn Caedmon is said to have composed in his dream. But the words are not the same as those of the earlier song. The proper action of the poem is opened by a description of the brightness and joy — the *gleám* and *dreám* — of the angel hosts in obedience to the Lord, until the highest of the angels, "who that ill counsel first began to weave," swollen with "pride, and of malicious hatred all athirst, said that he would strive with God for the wide clearness of heaven and make him a home and lofty seat in the north part of the skies."[1] Then God, filled with grim wrath, "made a woful dwelling for the false spirits — howls of hell and hard pains, a joyless deep; furnished with everlasting night and crammed with sorrows;" "filled full of fire, and with frightful cold, with reek of smoke and ruddy flame. Grim was the guilt they had gathered against God: grim was the reward He gave them." For "He beat down their courage and bowed their pride, since He was embittered; and took from them peace and joy and their

[1] Deep malice thence conceiving and disdain,
. . . . . .
Homeward with flying march where we possess
The quarters of the North. . . .
. . . . . .
Who intends to erect his throne
Equal to ours, throughout the spacious North. — *Par. Lost*, Bk. v.

glorious brightness." Then Caedmon, taking fire from his own thought of the wrath of God, describes the personal battle of God with His enemies, much as the poet describes the wrestling of Beowulf with Grendel. Milton makes the aspect alone of the Son of God enough to discomfit His foes, but Caedmon is less divine.

Stern the mood He had;
In His grimness wrathful, gripped He on His foes
With a cruel clutch, crushed them in His grasp;
Cut them off from home, in His heart enraged.
Genesis, l. 60.

When the battle is over, a far-off pathos comes into the tale. Caedmon, with more sympathy than Milton had, tells of the misery of the lost. "On a long way God drove the wretched ghosts: broken was all their boast, and bowed their strength, and their beauty shamed. In exile there they lived, fast bound in that dark dwelling. No more they sang their lofty song, but learned to know woe and care and sorrow and heavy pain, with darkness decked," as with a garment.

Then in swift poetic change and contrast the pleasure and peace of heaven is set over against their misery —

Then was sooth as ever soft society in heaven;
Manners fair and mild, and a Master loved by all,
By his thegns their king; and the glory of the warriors,
Of the joy-possessors, waxèd with the Lord. ll. 78–81.

It is the same contrast which is made in the last speech of God in the Prologue to *Faust*. Yet how changed in form is the modern conception, how laden with philosophy!

Doch ihr, die ächten Göttersöhne
Erfreut euch der lebendig reichen Schöne!
Das Werdende, das ewig wirkt und lebt,
Umfass' euch mit der Liebe holden Schranken,
Und was in schwankender Erscheinung schwebt,
Befestiget mit dauernden Gedanken.

God ponders then, as in Milton, how He may replenish the empty seats of heaven, and looks forth on the vast abyss. In its description the echo of heathen thought is heard, and we may have in it the early English form of that universal Teutonic conception which is best represented by the Norse *ginnûnga gap* — the chasm of chaos, the world of dark mist out of whose waste and yawning gulfs all creation rose. It is well to note the word *heolster-sceado* — the shadow that hides the caverned gloom, — Milton's "hollow dark"; indeed, that

sense of intense blackness of darkness which is so characteristic of Northern poetry appears throughout the noble lines I translate —

Nor was here as yet, save a hollow shadow,
Anything created; but the wide abyss
Deep and dim, outspread, all divided from the Lord,
Idle and unuseful. With His eyes upon it
Gazed the mighty-minded King and He marked the place
Lie delightless — (looked and) saw the cloud
Brooding black in Ever-night, swart beneath the heaven,
Wan, and wasteful all,[1] till the world became.
But the everliving Lord at the first created —
He the Helm of every wight — Heaven and the Earth;
Reared aloft the Firmament and this roomful land
Stablished steadfast there. . . .
. . . But as yet the Earth —
E'en the grass[2] — ungreen was now! Gloomed in Ever-night
Far away and wide, waters rolling wan,
Ocean veiled the world. Then the wondrous-bright
Spirit of the Heaven's Ward o'er the heaving sea was borne
With a mickle speed. . . . .
Then the Lord of triumphs let a-sundered be,
O'er the lake of Ocean, light apart from gloom,
Shadows from the shining. . . .
And of days the first saw the darkness dun
Fading swart away o'er the spacious deep.
Then that day departed o'er the ordered world
Of the midmost earth, and the Measurer drove
After the sheer shining — He our shaping God —
Earliest Evening on. On its footsteps ran —
Thrust along — the gloomy dark. That the King Himself
Named the Night by name. . . .
After that stept swiftly on, striding o'er the Earth,
Bright the third of morns. ll. 103–155.

[1] They viewed the vast immeasurable Abyss
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
And surging waves. *Par. Lost*, Bk. vii.

This whirling of the winds in the vast depths of darkness is not in the Teutonic conception. That chasm of chasms is silent. But Milton has other phrases for Chaos. He calls it "the wasteful Deep," "the waste, wide anarchy of Chaos, Damp and dark," "the unvoyageable gulf obscure," "the dark, unbottomed, infinite Abyss," "the vast Abrupt," — a splendid phrase.

The Void profound
Of unessential Night receives him next,
Wide-gaping, and with utter loss of being
Threatens him, plunged in that abortive gulf.
Par. Lost, Bk. ii.

Most of these phrases — so receptive was Milton — belong to the Teutonic and not to the classical conception of the Dark beyond.

[2] "A yawning gap was there, and nowhere was the grass." — *Volospà*.

Many of these phrases, especially when we consider that Caedmon was so near to heathen ways of thinking, are interesting. The earth, ungreen with grass, was the earth as yet undivine; to all Teutonic peoples the green sward was hallowed, and had a consecrating power. When Adam is created he "steps forth on the green grass." The description of Chaos may be compared with the Norse *Niflheimr* — the region under earth covered with eternal night, joyless, alien from the gods,[1] filled with surging mist. Deep in this unbottomed darkness the Christians afterwards put their hell. Then, the mickle speed with which the Spirit of God is borne over the deep, is a heathen thought added to the Mosaic story. That the evening is *shoved on* by God is paralleled by a phrase in *Beowulf*, where the bright morning is *scofen* and *scynded* (*shoved* and *shindied*), and belongs to the same class of notions about the dawn and day, evening and night, which represents them as living beings pursuing one another, and eagerly hasting up the sky. Night here runs and thrusts on after the day, like a dæmon, but day steps swiftly up the sky, like a youth in his joy.[2] There is a gap of three leaves now in the MS., and we come at once to the Creation of Man. The little phrase that "in the breast of both was burning love to God" marks the nature of the poet and his race. God Himself is "blithe of heart" as He blesses them, and that touch of Northumbrian love of quiet nature, of which I have already spoken, steals in when Eden is described.

At this point the work of the elder poet ceases, but we take it up (*Gen. A*) again at the story of Cain and Abel. The phrases "Books tell us," "as the Scriptures say," recall that part of the tale of Baeda where he says that Caedmon heard the Scripture narrated to him, and versed what he heard. The poem now, with the exception of an inserted simile and a few interesting phrases, becomes mere paraphrase. It is not till the poet comes to swelling sea and rain and storm and a great ship, — to matters, that is, with which he may have been familiar at Whitby — that he rises into any original work. The poem is set into dialogue, and the dialogue is always vigorous. God declares His wrath with the folk of earth, but "thou shalt have peace," He says to Noah, "when the swart water, the wan waves of death, swell with the sinful." "Make thee a mickle mere-house, and resting-places in it and shelves in the ship's bosom; let the seams be fast against the work-

[1] Milton's Chaos is equally apart from God.
[2] See Grimm's *Teut. Myth.*, articles "Day and Night."

ing of the waves with earth-lime, alone of its kind, which grows harder and harder the heavier the black sea-waves pash and push upon it." And he calls it an ocean-house, a mickle sea-chest, a sea-dwelling, a hewn-wood of the wave, a foamy ship, a nailed-up board, a wood fortress. Then the long description of the Flood begins, written by one into the study of whose imagination had crept the sea. God will let downward fall from above —

Slaughter rain upon the surface of the spacious earth.
And I'll set a feud of war for a space of forty days
'Gainst (the souls of) men ; and with surging troops of waves
Owners and their ownings, quell them all, in death ;
. . . . . .
When the blackening rack[1] 'gins arise (in heaven). l. 1350.

On this the verses follow which I have already quoted at p. 81, and we have the image painted of the ark floating high upon the flood, uninjured by that strange, indefinite creation of the English poets — the Terror of the Water —

Then afar and wide rode on, all the welkin under,
O'er the Ocean ring that excelling house ;
Faring with its freight ; and this faring ship, —
That swift sailer through the seas — durst no surges' terror
Heavy heave upon ; but the holy God
Led them on and freed them. Fifteen ells on high
Deep above the dunes stood the drowning flood of sea.
l. 1392.

The ark then rests on Ararat, "the sea began to ebb, and the heroes longed for the day when they might step over the nailed-plank out of their prison-house above the sea-stream's edge." It is a phrase which expresses what Caedmon must often have heard from seamen long tossed in storm. The raven is then sent forth, but the poet leaves him soon, and with the Northern tenderness, sets his imagination to work round the story of the Dove, expanding it with a delicate sympathy for the "gray-blue" bird —

Far and wide she went, her own will she sought !
All around she flew, nowhere rest she found,
For the flood she might not with her flying feet
Perch upon the land ; nor on leaf of tree
For the sea-streams step ; but the steep hills were
Overwhelmed with waters. Then the wild bird went
For the ark a-seeking, in the even-tide,

[1] I have taken the reading *sweart-racu* (black rack of clouds) instead of *streám-racu* (stream-course), — that which is drifted out of the mountain-side.

Over the wan wave, wearily to sink,
Hungry, to the hands of the holy man. l. 1455.

A second time she is sent forth, and the sympathy with animals and with joy which marks the old English poets is again expressed —

Far and wide she flew,
Glad in flying free, till she found a place
Fair, where she might rest! With her feet she stept
On a gentle tree. Gay of mood she was and glad,
Since she, sorely tired, now could settle down,
On the branches of the tree, on its beaming mast!
There she fluttered feathers, went a-flying off again,
With her booty flew, brought it to the sailor,
From an olive tree a twig, right into his hands
Brought the blade of green. ll. 1465–74.

Then the chief of seamen knew that gladness was at hand, and he sent forth, after three weeks, the wild dove who came not back again; for she saw the land and the greening trees. The happy creature, all rejoicing, would no longer of the Ark, for she needed it no more.

The poem hurries now through mere paraphrase till it arrives at the Abraham story. This begins with many speeches between God and Abraham, but there is nothing new in them. There is one, however — that of Abraham to Sarah on going down to Egypt — which, in the picture that introduces it, and in the turn given to the fear of the husband, might come out of a Greek tale —

Abraham made answer — (when) he marked in Egypt
Shining white the hornèd halls, and the high-built Burg
Blickering in brightness — . . . .
"When among Egyptians many haughty men
Shall have looked with eyes on thy lovely face —
When among the æthelings some of earls shall ween —
Woman sheen as elf — ! that (my wife) thou art,
Bed-companion bright of mine, then will one of them
Have thee to his own! I shall be in fear
Lest among these angered folk, one with edge of sword
Then may loose me of my life for his longing of desire."
l. 1820.

At last he reaches the invasion of Chedorlaomer;[1] and his experience of war leads him, finely inventing, to develop the story with freedom into 200 lines; introducing all kinds of English customs in war. We see first the Jordan Valley

[1] Some say that the Abraham story is by another writer. It seems difficult to impute to Caedmon, or to the author of the first part, a story so full of war and the genius of war. Yet in those times every man was likely to have seen war, and Caedmon, now advanced in years, may have remembered his youth.

wasted from the North by the four kings. It is a vivid picture of the invasion of a Northumbrian province. There can be nothing more historical. The whole "country-side is overspread with foes"

Then must many a fearful one,
Many a maiden, pale of cheek, pass away, in trembling,
To embracing of a stranger. Fallen were the shielders
Of the brides and bracelets, sickened of their blood-wounds.
l. 1969.

The country-folk gather under their kings and attack the invaders, and the battle is joined. "Loud were then the lances" the poet begins, but I have given the description of the first part of this battle (page 130). "Then were the Northmen overthrowers of the Southfolk"; and we almost seem to hear the note of a Northumbrian victory over Mercia, or perhaps of some Northumbrian woe like that when Ecgfrith fell at Nechtansmere, and though that was five years after the death of Caedmon, I mention it to make the reader feel that in this account we have an actual picture of the time. The folk of Sodom and Gomorrah, givers of gold —

In the surging crowd of shields shorn of their beloved were,
Of their warrior-comrades. Then they went them, for their life,
From that folk-encampment! . . . And they fell upon their track,
Eaten by the edge of sword, children of the æthelings.
. . . . Whom the weapons left
Went to find a fastness, but the foes shared all their gold,
Harried with their host that hoard-burg of men.
. . . All the maidens fled away
And the wives and widows, robbed by slaughter of their friends,
From their sheltered home. ll. 1998–2011.

So the "war-wolves exulted in their triumph and their booty;" but now "a man, a sparing of the spears, fared quickly from the battle-field seeking Abraham," and told all to the Hebrew earl; and the hero told the evil hap to his friends — Aner and Mamre and Eshcol, his willing war-comrades. "Quoth he, it was the sorest of all sorrows that his brother's son suffered so dreadful a need. Think of some rede to deliver him."

Then the brothers three,
With the swiftest speed when his speech was done,
Healèd his heart-sorrow with their hardy words,
Gave to him their troth that upon his foes, with him,
They would wreak his wrong, or upon the Warstead fall.
Then the holy hero bade the hostmen of his hearth
Take their weapons up; and of warriors he,
Found, in all, eighteen of ash-bearing men,

And three hundred eke, loyal to their lord.
Of them all he wist, well could every one
On the fighting Fyrd bear the fallow linden.

ll. 2033–44.

As evening falls, they draw near the camp. Then Abraham plans with his chief men — and the particularity of the plan makes me think that the poet had an actual night-surprise in mind — to attack his enemy in front and rear "to show them grimly the war-moot, and hard hand-playing on two sides, for so in the strife of spears God will give them success" —

Then adventured, I have heard, under shadows of the night,
Heroes keen to combat. In the camps was clashing
Of the shields and of the shafts; of the shooters falling;
Brattling of the bolts of war! Underneath the breast of men
Grisly gripped the sharp-ground spears
On the foemen's life. Thickly fell they there
Where, before, with laughter they had lifted booty. l. 2060.

The glory of the ashen-spears — the triumph of the Northern men — is reversed, and Abraham, Lot and the rejoicing women "saw the fowls of prey tearing the flesh of the murderers of freemen." To meet them bringing back the spoil and captives come the King of Sodom, and Melchisedek, bishop of the people. "Be thou honoured," cries Melchisedek to Abraham, "amidst the multitude of men in the eyes of Him who has given to thee war-glory of the ashes;" and he preaches such a little sermon as Aidan might have done to Oswald. After which the war-king of Sodom takes up the word, and he speaks well —

Give to me the maidens of my people here,
Those whom thou hast freed by the forces of thy host
From the death-clasps of these men. Keep the circled gold
Which was owned once of our people here,
Cattle, lovely trappings. Let *me* lead, in freedom,
All the bairns of æthelings back again to home,
To their wasted dwelling — all the women and the youths,
And the doleful widows! Dead are now their offspring,
Good folk-fellows in the fight, save a few alone
Who must now with me hold the mark (against the foe).

l. 2126.

Then Abraham answered, and we hear in his words the temper of a great English Ealdorman —

Wielder of these warriors, now I vow to thee
Here before the holy God . . . .
. . . . that of this world's good

Neither scat nor scilling, will I seize, lest afterwards
Thou should'st say unto thyself that I've surely been
On this earth enriched with the ancient treasure
Of the Sodom realm, [with silver and with gold].
But the booty mine by battle thou shalt bear away from hence,
All except the share of these æthelings of mine,
Of Aner and Mamre and of Eshcol too —
Never will I from my warriors take away their right.
Go, and bear with thee
Home the gold enchased, and the girls embraceable,
Women of thy people! For a while thou needest not
Fear the fighting rush of the foes we loathe —
Battle of the Northmen! For the birds of carrion
Splashed with blood are sitting, under shelving mountains,
Glutted to the gullet with the gory death of hosts. l. 2139.

With this fine passage, in which the English fierceness and pride break out in spite of the new gentleness of Christ, the war-story ends.

The paraphrase continues, relating the history of Abraham and Sarah, Ishmael and Hagar. A few passages are full of force. When the poet tells of the many lands the children of Abraham shall have, he paints this picture which might serve for many a Northumbrian fortress, if we may place it on a Roman site where stone walls and houses were seen by the English. It might do for York. Abraham's offspring, God says, shall have as their own

Each of the folk-lands far as these three waters
Sweep around with streams stone-burgs rising steep;
Foaming flow the floods round the fortress[1] of the folk.
l. 2211.

But the most striking thing is the love of dialogue. Everything is thrown into talk, and, unlike the story of the Fall in *Genesis B*, the dialogue is here more dramatic than epic. One might almost say that the dramatic genius of the English people begins to show itself in this early poem; and that it is possible — for Cynewulf runs also into dialogue — that the drama might have been much sooner developed in England, had not this tendency been, with others, overwhelmed by the long-winded story-telling which came to us from France. At any rate we have here, probably towards the end of the seventh century, that half-dramatic form of poetry which would easily slip among the common people into the miracle play, or the mystery. But the note of it both in feeling and form is much higher than that of the earlier mysteries. I give one passage

[1] *Byht* = dwelling or territory.

to illustrate what I mean. I have left out the connecting phrases — "her the angel answered," and the rest — and the piece becomes somewhat dramatic. The angel, a "thegn of glory," speaks to Hagar —

Angel. Whither hastest thou, O thou helpless woman,
Wanderings sore to suffer? Thee doth Sarah own.
Hagar. I have fled from woes, I, in want of every wish,
Mournful from my dwelling, from my mistress' hate,
From her vexing, from wrong words. Now within the waste
With a weeping face, must I wait my fate
When from forth my heart hunger or the wolf
Shall my soul and sorrow snatch away together.
Angel. Care not thou afar through thy flight to sunder
Fellowship with her; find her now again;
Earn to thee her pity; poor of spirit, now begin
To endure with goodness! Gracious be the Lord to you.
Genesis, l. 2272.

This is but one example of a quasi-dramatic method which is used through the *Genesis*. It is introduced also at intervals in the tale of the sacrifice of Isaac with which *Genesis A* abruptly ends. Homely Northern touches enter into it; and it has a further interest in this — that Caedmon was not so far from heathendom as never to have heard of human sacrifices. Here are portions of the story —

God, intent to know the fortitude of the Ætheling, tested him with austere words. "Go, Abraham, take thine own child with thee, offer, thyself, thine only son to me. When thou hast climbed the steep mountain, the ring of the high land, thou shalt make ready a bale-fire for thy bairn, slay thy son with edgèd sword, and then with swart fire burn up the body of thy loved one. And the holy man, the white-haired giver of gold, girded his gray sword upon him, bridled his ass and led forth Isaac from his Hof, a bairn unwaxen; then took his way across the waste, until that, wondrous bright over the deep water, arose the spear-point[1] of the third day." Then he "saw up-towering the high downs," and climbed them with his son —

Walking o'er the wolds; wood the son was bearing,
Fire and sword the father! . . .
So at last he stood on the high-land's roof.
Then began upload the pile and awaken fire,
And he fettered fast feet and hands alike

[1] *Ord* is the word used, "the sharp point of a spear," the "edge of a sword"; lit., the beginning (or end?) of a thing. It is here, I think, the first gold edge of the sun as it emerges from the sea, like the triangular top of a glittering spear.

Of his (only) bairn ! On the bale he heaved
Youthful Isaac up ; and at once he gripped
By the hilt the sword. With his hands he would
Slaughter now his son, sink the fire down
With his bairn's own blood. ll. 2898–2907.

It is almost an actual picture of a Norseman's human sacrifice, and the *Genesis* ends abruptly with its forbidding, and with the blessing of God on Abraham —

Pluck the boy away living from the pile of wood.

CHAPTER XVII

"GENESIS B"

GENESIS B (ll. 235–851) retells the story of the overthrow of the rebel angels, and then passes on to the tale of the temptation and fall of man; and most critics believe it to belong to a much later time than the seventh century. A multitude of theories have been formed about its sources, its writer, its age, its metre, and its quality. The most important of them all is that suggested by Sievers, and it is on the grounds he has partly established that the division of the *Genesis* into *Genesis A* and *Genesis B* has been made and generally accepted. He declares that in metre, in manner, in style, and in language this episode stands apart from all other English poetry; but, on the other hand, it stands very near to the Old-Saxon poem of the *Heliand* in metre, manner, style, and language. The *Heliand* is a poem of the ninth century on the Saviour; an account in verse of the Gospel history, the author of which used a Latin poem of the fifth century, written by Bishop Avitus of Vienne, as his original. Sievers claims to have proved that *Genesis B* is most nearly related in language and diction to the *Heliand*, and that its writer also drew largely from the poem of Avitus, from the books *De origine mundi*, *De originali peccato*, and *De sententia dei*, and that he is indebted to them for several "motives." On these grounds, he infers that the poem, out of which this episode of ours was taken and inserted in the *Genesis*, was originally written in Old Saxon by the author of the *Heliand*;[1] that an Englishman living in Germany translated it into English, and that the translation, having lost its later part, was, in the tenth century, incorporated into the *Genesis* poem in England.

[1] This, says Wülker, is the weakest part of Sievers' theory. Indeed, there is no clear evidence of it. The evidence here ought to be the strongest, and it is the weakest.

Professor Ten Brink turns the theory round, and rejects the notion of a translation. It was an Old Saxon — perhaps Bishop John of Æthelney, whom Ælfred brought from Old Saxony — who, using the Latin work of Avitus, and full of the spirit of the *Heliand*, of its metre, phrases, and style, wrote a poem on the fall of man in English and in England. Then some later editor of the Caedmonic *Genesis*, finding a gap in the manuscript at line 234 (and the sheet containing the beginning of the interpolated poem fails in the extant MS.), filled up the space from this second English poem on the same subject; but in order to give some unity to his work began again at the beginning of things, and told over again the Fall of the Angels, wholly reconceiving this subject, and stamping it with his own individuality. Thus Northern Germany, where the *Heliand* had sprung up from the seeds of English learning scattered by English missionaries, gave back in the *Genesis B* a part of what it had received."[1] I do not see why we may not make another supposition — that one of the Northern English missionaries to Germany, or an English descendant from them, who had with him the Caedmonic poems, and who became acquainted with the work of Avitus, wrote the episode as we have it, and incorporated it with the work of Caedmon. Its likeness to the *Heliand* might be explained by this Englishman having read the *Heliand*, or if the episode were written before the *Heliand*, by the writer of the *Heliand* having seen the English poem.[2] As regards the other theories, I refer my readers to the *Grundriss* of Wülker, where they are all given in brief and clear abstract. One thing alone seems to stand out with some clearness — that this episode is later than the rest of the *Genesis*, and that it has Old Saxon connections. Yet even that has been denied, and in the midst of these critical uncertainties, it is pleasant to go through the poem itself and to translate those passages which seem to have a literary value.

But first, it is right to say that it is not a paraphrase at all. It is a poem of some elaboration of design, having a beginning, middle and end, thrown with some artistic care into a whole and treated in a quasi-epic manner. Then the metre is very

[1] The whole statement will be found in Ten Brink's *Hist. Eng. Lit.* chaps. iv. viii., and in the Appendix A.

[2] A theory somewhat like this is that of Schmeller. He thinks that Caedmon's poems and the *Heliand* were written by the same poet. It seems a mere conjecture, but then conjecture runs riot over this subject.

different from that of *Genesis A*. The lines are lengthened out, 13, 15, 17, and even 21 syllables,[1] so that the abrupt short translations given by Thorpe and others do not, even in the slightest way, represent the gallop and numerous trampling of the Anglo-Saxon verse; nor the stately procession, in pathetic passages, of the language. Dr. Guest, who was profoundly impressed with the metrical movement of the *Genesis*, and whose authority on the matter deserves high consideration, declares[2] that "the passages in which Caedmon puts on all his sublimity are unfortunately among the most difficult. These extracts (which he gives) may serve, in some measure, to show the masterly manner in which he manages his numbers. His accent always falls in the right place, and the emphatic syllable is ever supported by a strong one. His rhythm changes with the thought — now marching slowly with a stately theme, and now running off with all the joyousness of triumph when his subject teems with gladness and exultation. There is reason to believe that to these beauties our forefathers were deeply sensitive, and that Caedmon owed to them no small portion of his popularity. In these respects he has no superior in the whole range of our literature, and, perhaps, but one equal." Guest had no doubt, it seems, of Caedmon's authorship of the *Genesis*.

It is some consolation if we are, as it seems, to throw aside *Genesis B* as Caedmon's, that so careful a scholar and so good a metrist as Dr. Guest, saw in his time nothing irrational in believing that Caedmon of Whitby was the writer of the Caedmonic poems of Junius, and that it did not occur to him to doubt that the writer of the beginning of *Genesis* was also the writer of *Genesis B*. In fact, he applies his remarks about the excellence of the rhythms almost more to the earlier than to the later work. He makes more quotations from *A* than from *B*. For myself, with all the criticisms before me, I see no absolute improbability in Caedmon having done the whole of *Genesis* and *Exodus*. I do not believe he did; but if the question were only literary, I should say that if we grant him poetic genius, then he may have had three different styles and periods — even in the space of ten or twelve years, even though he began so late in life; and his movement forward in power of thought and of technical excellence may have been extraordinary. No one can tell what genius may or may not do. It is beyond

[1] This is a special character of the *Heliand*, but the same expansion of the line occurs in other Anglo-Saxon poems belonging to the eighth century.

[2] *History of English Rhythms*.

analysis or prediction. Caedmon may have changed into *Exodus* and fallen to *Daniel*. But this is very improbable. If Caedmon had genius of this great character, it is likely that it would have burst forth before he was "well advanced in years." Moreover, even from the literary point of view, the argument against his authorship of this poem (235–851) is very strong. *Genesis B* has not only an intellectual subtlety which is wholly absent from *Genesis A*, but also it does not possess the poetic freshness which pleases us in the earlier work, in the account, for example, of the Flood and of the battles of Abraham. It smells of a more learned and more artificial age. There is also in this episode a distinct conception of the characters of Adam, Eve, and Satan, an effort to individualise them and to represent their action on one another, which is almost unknown in other Anglo-Saxon work, and which is utterly strange to the rest of the book. Unless Caedmon passed, within ten years, from a natural simplicity as objective as pictorial, to a complex, cultivated and somewhat artificial poetry, subjective and therefore less pictorial; unless he lost, as time went on and he became more of the monk, every trace of the heathen elements which lingered in the peasant; unless he changed somewhat as art changed from Giotto to Fra Angelico, he could not have written this portion of the *Genesis*. It is not impossible, but it is extraordinarily improbable.

Genesis B opens with the return of God to heaven after His warning to Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree; and then describes the Angel tribes in heaven, and especially One, "so powerful, so mighty in thought, swaying over so much, so beauteous in his form, like to the light stars," that he was second only to the Lord of Hosts. Pride and insolence seized on him, and it is one of the reasons given for this by the poet, that when Lucifer looked on his body he saw that it was "light and gleaming, clear-white and glorious-hued," as if physical beauty lifted him to the level of God. Then his haughtiness (while he is yet in heaven) breaks forth in a fine soliloquy —

278. Why, then, should I toil? quoth he. Not a shred of need there is
Now for *me* to have a master! With these hands of mine I may
Work as many wonders! Mickle wielding force have I
For the setting up of a goodlier stool than He
Higher in the Heaven! Why should I at all, for His favour be
His slave,
Bow to Him in such a bondage? I a god may be, like Him.

With me stand strong-hearted comrades, who will nevermore, in the struggle fail me;[1]
Heroes hardy-hearted! They have for their Lord, chosen me and hailed me:
286. Far-famed fighters they! Any one may plan a rede, with such followers as these
With such folk-companions frame it! They are ready friends of mine,
True in all their thoughts to me! I may be their (trusted) Lord
In this realm of mine to rule. So it is not right, methinks,
That for any favour I should need to fawn,
Or for any good, on God. I'll no longer be His Younger!

This is the wild Northern freedom! It is a great earl speaking, whose pride in personal beauty, whose insolence of individuality, has set him into haughty anger against his lord. In its swift revolt for the personal liberty of pride, and in the fierce brooding of that pride, in the sense of power expressed in it to work and to build a kingdom, in its deep feeling of the close relation of chief and thegns and of their mutual respect, in the praise of good rede with the Witan, the speech belongs to early English heathendom; and Milton, who also takes pride as the leading motive of the rebellion of Satan, similarly conceives the lonely rage of the Archangel, which yet, not altogether lonely, is shared with Beelzebub his friend; for Milton, unlike our poet whose Satan is more self-contained, creates a pathetic passion round his fiend by filling his heart with the ancient affections of heaven. Hell is then described, the abyss of pain; swart, victoryless,[2] deep-daled. At even, through unmeasured length of hours, fire is ever new; but it is interchanged with bitter cold —

315. At the earliest of the dawning comes the Eastern wind,
And a fierce-cold frost; ever fire or piercing cold;
. . . . . .

[1] See how, in his rising passion and appeal, the lines run on. This line has over twenty syllables. In the 286th line the first half consists only of the normal four syllables while the second half gallops into nine; and in the 290th line, being one of concentrated scorn, the syllables are reduced almost as low as possible. This is the self-restrained liberty and variety of a fine metrist, who uses his vehicle as the passionate music of thought, contracts and expands it to echo the vibration of his emotion. This free and noble manner of rhythms runs through the whole of this *B* portion of *Genesis*, and extends, but with a less variety of force and ease, into *Exodus*.

[2] *Victory-less — sigeleas*. I do not like the word I use, and *sige* as a prefix loses often its meaning of victory, and has the general meaning of *noble* or *glorious*, as when, in the *Andreas*, Matthew is called Andrew's *sigebrodor*. Nevertheless I keep the word *victory* as often as I can, because it brings us back to the early source of glory. There was no possibility of victory falling to the lot of any of the warriors of Hell; no glory there.

324. Hot the boiling (heat) of war in the breast of Hell,
Burning and the breadth of flame, and withal a bitter reeking,
Darkness, vapour dun . . . .
333. Lightless was the land, full of leaping blaze,
Mickle was the fear of fire.[1]

On this "bed of death" lay Satan, once sheenest of the angels, whitest within the heaven, fettered down with iron bands, feet and hands, and hafted over neck and breast with "great heat-smitten bars," so that when he plots the fall of man, he cannot carry out his plan himself, but must give it into the hands of one of his comrades. The rude picture in the MS. represents him bound in this fashion. "His thought boils about his heart," as hot as the hell around him; and here is the famous speech, which is almost the only passage in the poem known to Englishmen, and whose beginning, in its passionate regret for heaven and its lonely Northern pathos, is strangely like a renowned Miltonic passage[2] —

356. O how most unlike is this narrow stead
To that other home which of old we knew
High in Heaven's realm! . . .
. . . . . .
364. This the greatest of my sorrows —
Is that Adam now, who of earth was wrought,

[1] Here are some Miltonic parallels —

Beyond this flood a frozen continent
Lies dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms
Of whirlwind and dire hail.

The parching air
Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect of fire.

The damned are haled from beds of raging fire to starve in ice, thence hurried back to fire. — *Par. Lost*, Bk. ii.

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames
No light; but rather darkness visible . . .
The seat of desolation, void of light
Save what the glimmering of these livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful. — *Par. Lost*, Bk. i.

Milton has left out the reek, the bitter smoke.

[2] O how unlike the place from whence they fell!

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"
Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n? — This mournful gloom
For that celestial light?" . . .
"Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells!" — *Par. Lost*, Bk. i.

Shall possess my stool, hold my stronglike seat;
Be in bliss himself and we this bale endure,
Harm this hell within! Ai, ai! Of my hands had I the power,
Might I out of this for one hour be,
But one winter hour, with this host would I ——!
But about me braced lie the bands of iron,
Rides me here a rope of chains, realmless am I now!
Mickle fire is here
Over me and under. Ne'er before I saw
Landscape loathlier than this. Never lulls the flame
Hot along this hell . . . .
382. . . . . Round about me lie
(Heavy) forged in heat, of the hardened steel,
Great, the gratings barred. Me hath God with them
Hafted by the hals. Wherefore wot I well, that my heart He knew,
And as well He wist, He of warriors Lord,
That for Adam and for me evil-work would rise
All about the heavenly realm, had I only, anywhere, wielding[1] of my hands —
Yet we now endure, pains of doom in hell: such the darkness and the heat
Fierce and fathomless. Us hath God Himself
In the swart mists swept away.
393. Shall we not for this have vengeance,
And with any pain repay him since from Light he parted us?

God has made earth and men to take our place — on Adam then and on his offspring be our ill avenged! Turn them aside from God, till they, too, fall into this grim abyss. Here the bairns of men shall be our thralls! Begin we, now, to think upon this Fyrd.[2] Then he appeals to his thegns —

409. If to any thegn have I treasures of a king
Given in the days gone by, while as yet in that good realm
Blissfully we sat, o'er our seats had sway —
Then at ne'er a happier hour could he me repay,

[1] *Geweald* is, of course, "power," the German *gewalt*. But I think I may be allowed the above translation.

[2] The argument of Beelzebub in *Par. Lost*, Bk. ii., is very similar to this. I quote a portion of it, but the whole is worth comparison with our passage —

"Or, if not drive,
Seduce them to our party, that their God
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand
Abolish His own works. This would surpass
Common revenge, and interrupt His joy
In our confusion, and our joy upraise
In His disturbance; when His darling sons,
Hurl'd headlong to partake with us, shall curse
Their frail original, and faded bliss —
Faded so soon! Advise if this be worth
Attempting, or to sit in darkness here
Hatching vain empires.".

For my gift return me gift — if for that would one,
Any one of all my thegns,
Come out of this cellarage, and had craft with him[1]
Outwards far to fly with his feathered garment,
Wheel him through the welkin where, well-wrought, are standing
Adam and his Eve on the earth their kingdom
With their weal enwreathed — and[2] — O hither whirled adown are we
Into these deep dens. . . . .
. . . . . .

425. . . . . This is on my soul so sore,
Most this rueth me in heart, that the realm of heaven
Is their own for ever. Ah, if one of you
Should this work with any wiles — that the Word of God
They may leave and all His lore, loathier they'll be to Him!
If they break His bidding, then His wrath shall burn on them,
Then their weal is whirled away, and their wretchedness is readied,
Harm and sorrow hard! Have in thought then, all of you,
How ye may o'ercraft them, so within these chains shall I
Softly rest me then.

This is pure heathen, and the comfort of vengeance was never better put! "Who does this for me," he cries, "shall sit here by myself." Then one of his thegns sprang up and readied him for the journey, and it is a vigorous piece of word-painting —

442. Then a grim-set foe of God 'gan to gird himself,
Eagerly, in his equipment: artful was his mind;
Set on's head a hollow helm, and full hard he bound it,
Spanned it down with spangs;[3] many speeches well he knew
All of words awry! Thence he wheeled him upward,
Heaved him through the hell-doors, strength of heart had he,
Beat his wings the lift along,[4] foully bent his mind was;

[1] "Come on — you hear this fellow in the cellarage." — *Hamlet*. The Anglo-Saxon word is *clustor* — a bar, or cell. I use *craft* in the translation in the sense of power.

[2] This sudden breaking off at the *and*, with the fierce contrast which follows, is well wrought. The writer must have heard or been a great orator.

[3] "With glittering spangs that did like starres appear." — Spenser, *Fairy Queen*, iv. 11-45. Gascoigne also uses it in the *Steele Glasse*. Spang is a metal fastening.

[4] Literally, "played, moved up and down on the lift." It means the up and down movement of the wings, as "the hard hand-play" means the rising and falling of the smiting hands in battle; or it might mean that he himself rose and fell on the air of Hell, like Satan, who

> Puts on swift wings, and toward the gates of Hell
> Explores his solitary flight: sometimes
> He scours the right hand coast, sometimes the left;
> Now shaves with level wing the deep, then soars
> Up to the fiery concave towering high. — *Par. Lost*, Bk. ii.

Swung the fire on either side by his fiendish power,[1]
454. Till he Adam found in the earthly realm,
Wrought in wisdom there, and his wife was with him,
Winsomest of women. . . . .
460. And a twain of trees therein stood beside them;
With abundant fruit were they overladen.
466. . . . . Not alike their waxing was:
One was so delightful, beautiful and sheen!
Lythe it was and lovesome; that of life the tree was!
. . . . . .
477. But the other stood, swart above and swart below;
Dark it was and dusky, and of death it was the tree,
That much of bitter bare.

The temptation follows, set forth in dialogues which belong more to an epic than a dramatic manner. The inventiveness of the talk and the imaginative presentation of the subject — those two essential qualities — are equally remarkable. They are even subtle, of that subtlety which does not belong to the simpler age of poetry. But the full impression is spoiled by repetition of thoughts and words.

The fiend throws himself into the form of the Worm and winds himself round the tree of death, and with the fruit in his grasp (for he is as yet the Worm with hands and feet) speaks to Adam: "Longeth thee for aught, Adam, up to God? Hither on His errand I have fared from far! Not long since I sat with Himself, and He bade me tell thee to eat this fruit, that thy strength, thy mind, should be mightier. Thou hast made thyself dear to God; I heard Him praise thee. By me He bids thee learn knowledge. Take then this fruit in hand, bite it and taste. Thy heart shall be expanded, and thy form for it the fairer." "When I heard the Lord of Victory speak," answers Adam, "and bid me hold fast His word, and gave me this bride — this woman fair and sheen — swart hell, He said, should hold him who bore aught of that loathly thing in his breast. I wot not whether, lying, thou comest here, or art in truth a messenger from Heaven." And the English caution of the speech, with its note of scorn, ends in a sharp repulse of the tempter, and an outburst of trust in God — "I know naught of thy bidding, works or ways; I do know what He bade me when last I saw Him. To none of His angels art thou like. Therefore I hear no more from thee; thou mayest take thee hence! Fast is my faith in the Almighty God who wrought me with His hands, and He can give me all good

[1] On each hand the flames
Driven backward slope their pointing spires. — *Par. Lost*, Bk. i.

things, even though He send no Junger here." Wroth of mood, the mightiest of Scathers turned him where Eve was standing — and sheen was she shapen — and first he frightens her. "God will be in wrath when He hears that His message is rejected. But if thou listenest to me, punishment will be warded off from both of you. Then will thine eyes also become so clear that thou shalt see all over the wide world and the throne of God Himself and win His grace. Then, too, thou mayest turn Adam round thy pleasure, if thou hast will for that."[1] So with lies he lured her, and "the Worm's thought began to seethe within her; her heart bent to his tempting." She took the fruit of the tree of death, and straightway —

603. Sheener to her seemed all the sky and earth;
All this world was lovelier; and the work of God,
Mickle was and mighty then, though 'twas not by man's device,
That she saw (the sight) — but the Scather eagerly
Moved about her mind. . . . .
611. "Now thyself thou mayest see, and I need not speak it —
O thou, Eve the good, how unlike to thy old self
Is thy beauty and thy breast since thou hast believed my words!
. . . . Light is beaming 'fore thee now,
Glittering against thee,[2] which from God I brought,
White from out the Heavens. *See, thy hands may touch it!*
Say to Adam then, what a sight thou hast,
And what powers — through my coming!"

Then follows on this fine thought a pretty picture of Eve and a noble description of the vision she sees through the magic power of the fruit. I give it in parts. It is, alas! filled up with homiletic passages —

626. Then to Adam went Eve, the sheenest of all women,
Winsomest of wives, e'er should wend into the world,
For she was the handiwork of the heavenly King.
. . . . Of the fruit unblest
Part was hid upon her heart, part in hand she bore.
655. "Adam, O my Lord, this apple is so sweet,

[1] Milton puts this thought in the mouth of Eve —

> Shall I to him make known
> As yet my change, and give him to partake
> Full happiness with me, or rather not,
> But keep the odds of knowledge in my power
> Without copartner? so to add what wants
> In female sex, the more to draw his love,
> And render me more equal, and perhaps —
> A thing not undesirable — sometime
> Superior; for, inferior, who is free? — *Par. Lost*, Bk. ix.

[2] *Glaedlic ongean*, "glad or shining against thee." It comes pouring on to her in waves.

Blithe within the breast ; bright this messenger ;
'Tis an Angel good from God ! By his gear I see
That he is the errand-bringer of our heavenly King !
. . . . I can see Him now from hence
Where Himself He sitteth, in the south-east throned,
All enwreathed with weal ; He who wrought the world !
And with Him I watch His angels, wheeling round about Him,
In their feathered vesture, of all folks the mightiest,
Winsomest of war-hosts ! Who could wit like this
Give me, did not God Himself surely grant it me.
. . . . Far away I hear —
And as widely see over all the world,
O'er the universe widespread ! — All the music-mirth
In the Heavens I can hear ! — In my heart I am so clear,
Inwardly and outwardly, since the apple I have tasted.
See ! I have it here, in my hands ; O my good Lord !
Gladly do I give it thee ; I believe from God it comes ! "

It is characteristic of English feeling, but curiously unlike Milton who makes Adam yield at once, moved by overwhelming love, that the Cædmonic Eve takes the whole day, speaking closely to him with many beseechings, to make the man eat; and he surrenders at last, as Merlin to Vivien, half from love and half from weariness. As if to insist on this, it is twice, thrice repeated that his heart began to change towards her will, though I fancy that the repetitions are but interpolations. Yet the honour of the woman is saved as it is not in Milton. She did not do this for the sake of wrong, but "through a faithful heart, to win for Adam all the good the fiend — who seemed to her an angel — had promised them from God." At the last he from the woman took

718. Hell and Hence-departure,[1] though 'twas hight not so,
But it owned the name only of a fruit.
Yet it was Death's dream, and the Devil's subtle lure,
Hell and Hither-going, heroes' overthrow,
Murder it of men !

Then in a fine exultant joy Satan's Thegn, having won his day, bursts out into triumphant mockery; and so vividly does the poet see the thing that he makes his devil, excited by the flaming joy of vengeance, call up before his eyes the very presence of his master, bound deep in hell, and speak to him as it were face to face. "Soon as the fruit touched at the heart of Adam then laughed and sported there that bitter-thoughted messenger; and cried out for both of them his thanks to his Lord" —

726. "Now for me I have the favour
Thou hast vowed me, won, and thy will accomplished !

[1] Death.

Now for many, many days men are here befooled,
Adam and his Eve! Unto them disfavour
Weirded from the Wielder is. . . .
. . . . So they shall no longer
Hold the heavenly realm, but to hell must go
Down the swart descent. So, no more of sorrows
Need'st thou bear within thy breast, where in bonds thou liest;
Nor have mourning in thy mind for that men are dwelling
In the heavens high, while that harms must you and I
Now endure, and direful woes, and the dusky land.
. . . . Therefore let thy mind
Blithe within thy breast be now!

For two things are done — the children of men have lost the skies, and into the flame, into hot hell, shall wander down to thee — and eke is harm to God and grief of mind wrought out. Whatever misery we bear

This is now on Adam all paid back again,
With the loathing of his Lord and with utter loss of heroes,
With the murder-pains of men! Therefore is my mood all healed,
Round my heart my thought's enlarged, all our harms are now avenged,
All the pain we long endured! Now will I again, to the flaming low be nearer!
Satan I will seek therein; he abides in swarthy hell;
Captive held in clasp of rings!" Netherward his course again
Took that bitterest of boders.

There are not many passages finer than this in the poetry of scornful joy. The sudden outburst of contemptuous laughter, the Northern joy in vengeance, as if it were a sport (*plegode* is the word used), and mingled with it and uplifting it beyond mere vengeance, the Germanic clinging of the war-comrade to his chief, are nobly expressed. He scarcely thinks of himself (save for one characteristic touch of pleasure that he has won his high seat) in his rejoicing that his lord will be blithe and comforted of all his pain where he lies bound, for now he has his vengeance; and the triumphant return to hell is equally for his master's sake. There is no wish to linger in the bright air, no liking, such as Milton's Satan has, for Paradise. He returns at once, exulting that he has never bowed the knee — no, nor his chief — to God.

Adam and Eve are left, conscious of their fall, "and oft between them words of sorrow went." In Milton the pleasure of sin continues in lust of each other, and then, in reaction after the joy of the flesh, they feel their guilt. Mutual recrimination follows, and not till that is exhausted does repentance follow and prayer. But here the mocking of the fiend and the

vanishing of Eve's vision of God bring about the sense of ruin instantly, and as instantly repentance. It is the Northern quickness of conscience. Other elements are now added to the situation — tenderness to one another and a passion of penitence. There is no mutual blame as in Milton, no lack of courtesy from the man to the woman, no subordinate relationship of the woman to the man, such as in Milton seems to license the reproofs of Adam. Adam here makes one reproach, not bitter but in sadness of love, and Eve's short answer is tender and still. She never ceases to be to him the most winsome of women. He thinks more of his own sin than of hers, and in broken sentences, which, in the poet's way of expressing strong emotion, are not ended (the thoughts forcing themselves into fresh forms before their first form is completed, a manner Shakspere sometimes has), Adam breaks into a wild cry of desire to do the will of God such as we do not find in Milton. Here follows part of this scene, and it is worth while, for it is a touch of pure art, to call attention to the dark contrast now introduced to Eve's splended vision, when Adam cries out — "Seest thou *now* Hell?"

Adam speaks —

"O, alas, thou, Eve, ill indeed hast thou marked out
For ourselves, our fate![1] See'st thou *now* the swarthy Hell,
Greedy there and ravening? Now the roaring grim of it
Mayst thou hear from hence! O, the Heaven-realm
How unlike that flame! . . . .
. . . . Hunger rends me now and thirst
Bitter in my breast; erst of both we were
Careless at all times.
How shall we live now or this land indwell,
If the wind come here from the West or out of East,
From the South or North? Swart upclimbs the cloud,
Falls the showery hail, swift and close from heaven:
Frost therewith is faring, fiercely cold it is!
Out of heaven at times, hot above us blazing,
Blinds us, bright, the sun. . . . .
. . . . . .
But with us Almighty God
Wrath in spirit is! — O to what shall we become!
Now may long it rue me that I prayed the Lord of Heaven,
He the good All-Wielder, till He wrought thee here for me,
From these limbs of mine! Now thou'st led astray
Me into the wrath of God. So may I repent me now
Ever and for ever that mine eyes have seen thee."
Then again Eve spoke, sheenest of all women,
Loveliest of wives — . . . .

[1] "You tried to play the part of God — and finely have you done it."

824. "Thou mayst it reproach me, Adam, my beloved,
In these words of thine; yet it may not worse repent thee,
Rue thee in thy mind than it rueth me in heart."
Then to her for answer Adam spoke again —
"O if I could know the All-Wielder's will,
What I for my chastisement must receive from Him,
Thou should'st never see, then, anything more swift,—
though the sea within
Bade me wade the God of Heaven, bade me wend me hence
In the flood to fare — Nor so fearfully profound
Nor so mighty were the Ocean, that my mind should ever
waver —
Into the abyss I'd plunge, if I only might
Work the will of God!"

"But naked like this we may not stay. Let us go into the covert of the holt. So they went mourning into that green wood, and there they fell to prayer, and every morning begged of God the Almighty that He would not forget them, but make known to them how henceforward they should live."

Here ends, at line 851. *Genesis B.* *Genesis A* now takes up the story. The well-known dialogue follows between Adam, Eve, and God in the garden, and though it is chiefly paraphrase, yet English touches enter in, enough to interest the hearers of the song. At last the scene closes, and in the pity of the writer there is left for comfort to these exiles, not only the fruits of the ground, but also — and it is a poet's consolation — "the roof of Heaven full of holy stars." "Behind their steps, with flaming sword, a holy watcher closed the Home of hope and happiness and joy." It is the same picture, but how different in power, as Milton drew —

> They, looking back, all th' eastern side beheld
> Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
> Wav'd over by that flaming brand; the gate
> With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms.

CHAPTER XVIII

"EXODUS"

The poem of the *Exodus*, in the judgment of nearly all the critics, is by a single writer who had nothing to do with either the *Genesis* or the *Daniel*. It certainly stands alone, a complete and united whole. Even the episode which is intruded into the midst of the overthrow of the Egyptians, and which links the Israelites back to Abraham, is judged by Wülker and others to be by the same writer as the rest of the poem. If so, he is less of an artist than I should otherwise think him. The episode interrupts the story at the moment of its greatest interest, and is also excessively dull. I can scarcely conceive that a writer, who has some sense at least of unity and of choosing the best things to describe, can have been so dull. I should rather think that he or some one else wrote this piece as a separate song — as a kind of explanatory gloss — and that afterwards it was inserted by a stupid copyist into the poem. At any rate, this is not a poem which lends itself to critical disintegration. We are spared A, B, and C, and all their tribe.[1] The thing is a whole, and can be spoken of as such. It is taken up with one event — with the Exodus — the beginning, progress and close of which it records; it moves swiftly and it ends well. Triumph begins it and triumph concludes it. In the midst is the trial of the Israelites and the destruction of the Egyptians.

The use of dialogue is not so common as in the *Genesis;* and when it is used it is brief and dry. On the other hand, the descriptive parts are long, and elaborately treated. We are by no means so close to human nature as we are in the *Genesis*. In this poem there is neither the simplicity of human feeling we find in *Genesis A*, nor the intellectual subtlety which belongs to *Genesis B*. Description, not passion, fills the lines; but the

[1] It has been done, however, by Strobl and others, but fortunately not so as to convince even the giants of disintegration.

description is of a more careful and conscious finish than any in the *Genesis*. There is no actual battle such as that between Abraham and the kings of the East, but war and the circumstance of war are a great pleasure to this writer. The gathering of hosts, their march, ensigns and music, their ordering, their camping, the appearances and speeches of the chiefs, are drawn with so much clearness and personal interest that we feel that the writer had been an eager warrior. The real battle of the poem is the battle of God, and of the charging waves God wields, with Pharaoh and his host; and a fine piece of rough early work it is. God strikes, to let the water-destruction loose, the walls of wave on either hand "with an ancient sword."[1] It is no battle then of host with host, but of Jehovah Himself, wielding the elements as His weapons, with Pharaoh. A great number of curious, vigorous, and pictorial expressions, of which the sense is too often repeated, mark a time much later than the quieter style of the earlier *Genesis;* and the freer handling of the Bible story, as if the writer had wholly rejected paraphrase in order to compose a work of art, is some proof of a later date. I am not sure that the poetry is not too forcible, too much desirous of effect, too flamboyant, if I may be allowed that term; and were this true of the whole, as it certainly is of some parts, it would be characteristic of a poetic period which had just taken its first turn towards sensationalism, but which, nevertheless, retained a great deal of the power of a simpler and more natural age of song. There is also no sense of regret or looking back in the poem, such as we find in Cynewulf's later work. Wherever in date we put *Judith*, we may put the *Exodus*. There is in both the same literary audacity and youthful exuberance. The *Exodus* opens with a celebration of Moses as the giver of laws and as a leader of men, beloved of God and consecrated to the deliverance of Israel. His future work in Canaan is briefly touched. Then we hear that it was in the desert of Sinai, before the Exodus, that the truth about creation was revealed to him; in what way "the Lord, mighty in victory, set the rounded circle of the earth and on high the firmament"; and at this point, after thirty lines of brief introduction, the poet sweeps instantly into his subject, and with a fine image which carries with it the central matter of the poem —

33. Then in that old time, and with ancient punishments,[2]
(Deeply) drenched with death was the dreadest of all folk.

[1] There is another rendering of this which I mention in its place.
[2] That is, with drowning — with the ancient doom of the Flood.

First, the fate of the first-born is described, and the words used are full of interest —

By the death of hoard-wards wailing was renewed;
Slept the joyous song in hall spoiled of all its treasure!
God had these man-scathers, at the mid of night,
Fiercely felled (in death) — heaps of the first-born.
Broken were the burg-defenders; far and wide the Bane strode;
Loathly was that people-Hater! All the land was gloomed
With the bodies of the dead; all the best were gone away.
Far and wide was weeping, world-delight was little,
Locked together lay the hands of the laughter-smiths![1]
47. . . . . Famous was that day
Over middle-earth when the multitude went forth.

Then follows the journey to Ethan, through "many a narrow pass and unknown ways, until, all armed, they came to the dark warriors (the Ethiopians), whose lands were covered with a helm of air, and whose march-fortresses were on the moorland."[2] Below them lay "the land of the Sun-men, the burnt-up city heights, and the folk embrowned with hot coals of heaven. But the holy God shielded the folk against the dreadful glare, o'erspread the blazing heaven with a veil, with a holy network.[3] It drank the fire-flame up, and the heroes were amazed; gladdest of troops were they. The o'ershading of the Day-Shield[4] wended (was drawn over) the welkin, for the God of wisdom had overtented the pathway of the Sun with a sail, though the men saw nothing of the mast-ropes nor of the spars of the sail, nor how was fastened down that greatest of field-houses. When the third encampment brought comfort to the folk, all the army saw how high were uplifted the sacred sails! 'Twas a Lift-wonder, flashing light; and the

[1] This is one of the short and vivid phrases of this writer. All who made laughter sat with hands clasped in woe; and the word "laughter-smiths" is peculiar to this poet, who goes out of his way to be strange.

[2] *Mearchofu morheald*, "moor-holding mark-enclosures." This reads like a personal remembrance, perhaps of forts on the Northumbrian border.

[3] Another of this poet's favourite metaphors is that of a *Net*. Here the cloud-shield is like a woven web. At line 202 an army is *wael-net*, "slaughter-net."

[4] I suppose this is the concave firmament which is conceived of as a shield hung over the earth, under whose hollow the day abides. But it may be the sun itself, which in Icelandic poetry is sometimes called the shield of the sky. Grein translates *Daeg-scealdes*, "Tag-schiffes," perhaps to bring it into harmony with the strange and, I think, unique metaphor of *the sail* which follows. But the shield-image is, I think, right. I cannot but fancy from several phrases in the passage that the writer had heard of the velarium spread over the amphitheatre, and that he used the image of it here to express the mist-covering, the pillar of cloud, which protected the Israelites from the blaze of the sun. If this conjecture be right, it explains the ropes, the mast, and the mighty tent — "greatest of field-houses."

people knew that the Lord had come Himself to mark their camping out."

This sail is the poet's shaping of the pillar of cloud which led them by day. "The sail directed their journey." He then describes the pillar of fire by night, and his imagination pictures its effect upon the armour of the host in the shadows of the night, and how it drove away from the hearts of the Israelites that terror of the waste-land of which we have heard in *Beowulf* —

111. Brilliantly
Stood above the shooters, sheen, a fiery light!
Shimmered then the shields, shadows slunk away.
All abysmal shades of night scarcely had the power
Then to hide their hollow cave,[1] Heaven's candle blazed (so bright).
'Twas a new night-warder who must of necessity
Watch above the warriors — that the wan-gray heath,
Through the terror of its waste, through its tempests, ocean-like,
Should not sunder ever, with a sudden grip, their souls.
Fiery flaming locks had that Forward-ganger;
Brilliant were his beams; bale and terror boded he
To the thronging host with the heat of flaming fire.[2]

At length "the sea-fastness at the limit of the land withstood the men." There they rested, while the "meat-thegns" waited on them with food. "At the sounding of the trumpet, the sailors (so the poet calls them) spread out the tents along the slopes of the mountains. The fourth encampment then, this resting-place of the shield-warriors, was by the Red Sea shore." While they rested, "dreadful tidings from inland came into their camp. The loathly foe was on their track. Hopeless grew their heart when they sighted clear, from the Southern ways, Pharaoh's fyrd a-forward ganging."

I have translated (page 129) the fine passage which follows, describing the coming of the Egyptian host — flags flying, trumpets sounding, the ravens circling above it, the wolves

[1] That is, the fire-pillar was so bright that the deep shadows of night, flying to their cave, where they sheltered and lived by day — a common conception — could scarcely hide it from the attack of the light, or, prevent the light from discovering it.

[2] This looks like the description of a comet, done from memory or from sight. The fiery locks, the forward movement suggest this, and the boding of bale-terror is a part of the popular superstition of comets. I have looked into the *Chronicle*. In 678 "a comet (the Star Cometa) appeared in August and shone like a sunbeam every morning for three months." This then Caedmon saw. In 729 the entry is, "This year a comet appeared, and St. Ecgberht died at Ii." In 892 another is recorded: "Some men say in English that it is a hairy star, because a long radiance streams from it, sometimes on one, and sometimes on the other side."

howling on its skirts, the haughty thegns riding in the van, the king with his standard in front of his thegns, fastening his visored helm, shaking his linked armour. Close beside him riding were his veteran comrades — hoary wolves of war, who greeted the battle, thirsting for the fray, faithful to their lord. The well-known horn gave order by its notes how the host should march along! So the dusky warriors heavily moved on, troop after troop, thousands and thousands of fighters. "But in the camp of Israel weeping was upraised, an awful evening song. Terrors stood round them and guarded the death-net,[1] as the noise (of marching hosts) came on and the frightful tidings flew." But he turns to contrast the glory of the host of Pharaoh with the dark fate that was at hand. Haughty, battle-brilliant were the warriors, but their doom was already dealt.

The next part opens with the rousing of the Israelites. All night, hopeless, they sat on the hill-slopes in gleaming weeds of war, till Moses bade the earls —

216. With the blare of brass at the break of day
All the folk to gather and the frack to rouse,
Don their linkèd war-coats, dream of noble deeds,
Bear their blickering armour, with their banners call
Nearer to the strand the squadrons! Swiftly then the watchmen
Now bethought them of the war-cry. Hastened was the host!
At the sound of shawms, on the sloping hills,
Struck their tents the sailors.

The twelve tribes are marshalled under their leaders, their numbers are counted; the gray-headed warriors are left aside, "and the youths who could not yet guard their breast-net against the foe under the rim of the shield," nor had yet endured the "boastful play of the spear." Quick and eager were they all when the pillar of gleaming cloud showed them their way.

248. Then uprode their banner,
Brightest this of beams: all abode there, waiting,
Till the Pointer of their path, near the pourings of the sea,
Lightening on the lindens, broke the lift-enclosures.[2]

[1] The passage is obscure. I think it is the poet's reading of the 19th verse of the 14th chapter of Exodus: "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. It was a darkness to the Egyptians." A terror then stood round the host of the Israelites, and defended their army — "the slaughter-net." This phrase, in the writer's fantastic metaphor, may mean the interlocked array of the army.

[2] This banner is, I suppose, the cloud-pillar, "the boder of their path" (*siδ-boda*). It comes in front of them in the morning, glowing bright, and its gleam is reflected on the linden-shields, as it breaks like the sun through the

This is a fine picture, and the writer may have seen that which follows. It is the image of the English host-leader when the crisis of action drew near, and he made his war-speech. "Then to the forefront of the heroes leaped the war-chief, and upheaved his shield; bade the folk-leaders silence the host, that all might hear. 'Have no fear,' he cried, 'though Pharaoh bring vast armies of sworded warriors.'" God will overthrow them. And with scorn and faith he uses, as I think, the same bold figure that Keats uses when Lorenzo rides with the brothers — "And those two brothers with their murdered man," — he calls the whole proud Egyptian host, dead men. "Nor will ye dread these dead troops. The loan of their life is taken from them. High-hearted and high-famed is Abraham's God, and His hand is mighty."

At this Moses turns to the sea, and in the vivid realistic way of this writer, Moses, while he divides the sea, describes its doings. We see, we almost hear, the sea retreat —

278. Hearken, look ye now, most beloved of folk,
(See) how I have stricken, I and this right hand,
With a green rod Ocean's deep!
Up the surge is faring, swiftly is it working
Water to a fortress-wall! Now the ways are dry;
Ashen-gray the army-paths, opened out the main,
Old profounds of sea; I have never heard
Over all mid-garth men have fared thereon:
(Lo) the fields of foam,[1] sea-foundations fettered down,
That from everlasting, on unto this instant,
Waves have vaulted o'er. (See) the south wind's swept away
Blowing of the bath-way; burst asunder is the Deep!
(Now) the ebb's spewed forth the sand.
295. Now the Lord has lifted up
To a shield-like mountain all the Red Sea-streams.
There[2] before you are the walls; fair are they uptowered!
Wondrous is this wave-upfaring to the Welkin's roof.

The march begins, tribe by tribe, each in order, with their banners and their devices. "They raised their white lindens and their standards on the shore. First went the fourth tribe

clouds — the air-fortresses — of the night. *Lyft-edoras*, "air-enclosures." *Edor* is a fence, such as was thrown round Bamboro'; and becomes that which was fenced in, a town or a fortress. I wish I could think that the Boder, the herald of their journey, was the sun, and that this was a description of his bursting through the wall of night-clouds upon the horizon, and lighting up the shields of the host as they stand upon the seashore.

[1] The foamy fields here, are not the foam-covered surface of the sea, but the wide path laid bare across the sea on which the foam lies white. For *Saelde saegrundas*, some read "salt sea-depths"; but it is not apart from Teutonic myth to think of the bottom-rock of ocean as riveted to its place.

[2] I have ventured on this translation of *syndom þâ foreweallas*.

and waded into the wave-stream, o'er the greenish depth. It was the tribe of Judah. Eagerly and alone it led on that unknown way. These upreared over their shields, above the crowd of spears, a lion all of gold. The greatest of folk bore the boldest of beasts. No insult to their leader did they ever bear when in the war they lifted the spear-wood." In the van, they ran to onset—

329. Bloody were the bill-tracks and a rush of battle-strength,
Grind on grind of visored-helms— there where Judah drove.

After them went the sons of Reuben—"sailors proudly moving, shields these sea-vikings (*saewicinge*, the word may suggest a date for the poem) bore over the salt marsh." Next came the sons of Simeon; "their ensigns waved over their spear-faring, and their shafts were wet with dew. Then the rustling murmur of the day-dawn came to them over the moving of the ocean; God's beacon rose, bright shining morn."

At this moment the episode of the descent of the Israelites from Noah and Abraham is introduced, and to the spoiling of the action of the poem. The sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, "father of free-born men," closes it; and it is followed by the two parts which end the poem—the overthrow of the Egyptians, and the triumph of the Israelites on the farther shore. The poet has put all his force into the description of the Overwhelming, but in the effort he shows that he is not a great artist. He has not been able to choose out of all the images that have occurred to him the best fitted to make the reader create the scene for his own imagination. He has not been able to introduce the catastrophe so as to double its horror, nor so to end it as to leave the horror of it in the mind. It is not done as Æschylus has done the outbreak of all the elemental forces on Prometheus. Our writer says over and over again the same thing in different words, using that cumulative method, which is sometimes effective, but which is, of all methods, the most dangerous an inferior artist can use. It leads him to violence of expression, to repetition of words and images. He thinks he will be heard for his much speaking. He is heard, but he wearies the hearers. As an example of what I mean, and because there is also a detached vigour and fury in some of the repeated descriptions, with a few but startling images, I translate part of the overwhelming of the host—

446. Then afeared was the folk, terror from the flood o'ercame
These deep-troubled souls; ocean threatened them with death.

All besteamed with blood [1] heaved the billows mountain high;
Foul gore spat the sea; on the surges clamour rose;
Full of weapons was the water; slaughter-vapour rose.
454. . . . . Darkened then against them
Baleful billows' welter! Never back did any one
Of the host return to home, but behind them Wyrd
Wrapt them with her wave. Where the ways had lain
Mad of mood the sea was! Drowned the might (of Egypt) lay!
Then upsurged the streams; storm(of cries) went up
High into the Heavens — greatest of host-wailings!
Shrieked aloud the loathly foes, and above, the lift grew black:
Blood was borne along the flood with the bodies of the doomed!
Shattered were the shield-burgs![2] This, of sea-deaths greatest,
Beat upon the firmament.

The next lines repeat the same picture. A fine phrase speaks of the ice-cold sea (once wont with the salt waves to wander over its ever-during foundation) returning as a naked boder of evil, as a herald coming on foot filled with a foeman's wrath, to fall upon the Egyptians. Another describes the "blue air" — that is, the dark purple thunder-clouds (for the sky could not be "azure" in this awful hour) — as blent with gouts of gore; and another the inbursting sea threatening blood-terrors to the Egyptians.

Again and again, in anxiety to realise the scene by repetition, we see the poet struggling in vain to find the brief words with which a great poet would have left the right and awful impression on our mind. Even when he comes to the last, the real matter, he fails, yet his final effort deserves translation —

481. Rushed all foam the flood, sank the fated down,
On the Lake-land[3] tumbled! All the lift was troubled!
Smashed, the strong walls fell, burst the surges in,
Melted were the towers of sea, when the Mighty smote
Heroes strong as trees;[4] all that stately people.
489. . . . . Wild grew Ocean then.
Up it soared, and in it slid![5] Terrors stood about them,

[1] This is the phrase used in the runes of the Ruthwell Cross, on the relic in St. Gudule, and in the *Vision of the Rood*.

[2] The sea-walls that sheltered them.

[3] That is, the Ocean which had become firm as land; but there is another reading, "the Lake (the Ocean) road."

[4] *Wer-beam*, "tree of defence," hence warrior; but why not men like trees, strong or tall as trees?

[5] That is, the wall of water on either side, leaped upwards and fell inwards; as a retreating wave meeting the incoming wave becomes a leaping ridge of spires and then tumbles inwards. *Up âteah, on sléap*, is quite excellent. *Egesan stôdon*, "terrors stood," is nothing more than a conventional phrase; there were terrors about them; but its original use goes back to the time when terrors were thought of as personages.

Welled the death-wounds forth ! Fell the wondrous road [1]
High from Heaven down, handiwork of God.
Then He smote the flood-defences, foamy-breasted (walls),[2]
Sea that sheltered them no more, with His sword of old ;
So that, by its dint of death, slept the doughty men,
Slept that crowd of sinners ! Fast encompassed there,
Pale as flood, the war-men fled out of their souls,
When the brown Upweltering overwhelmed them all, —
Highest that of haughty waves ! All the host sank deep.

"So did the mightier Warden of the sea-flood drown all the manhood of Egypt. With His death-grip, wrathful and dreadful, He decided the battle. Nor was one left to tell through the burgs that most baleful of tales, to tell to their women the death of the hoard-wards; sea-death swallowed the mighty hosts. They fought against God."

This is the end of the Overthrow. The close of the poem runs on for seventy-four lines. It tells how Moses, on the farther shore, gave everlasting redes to men; and the poet turns aside to preach a little sermon to his hearers of the joy of the grace of God; how lightly it is lost by sin, and how eternal a pit is hell; how near at hand are the arch-thieves, old age, and early death; and last, the Judgment Day. Then Moses speaks of the glory of God the leader of the Hebrews, of the lands and honour they shall win. And when he ended, "the folk rejoiced, the trumpets of victory sang, the banners arose to that fair sound." They looked on the sea, and all bloody seemed to them the foaming wave through which they had moved with their sarks of the battle. The men sang of glory, the women in their turn. That greatest of folk-troops sang their war song.

579. Then was easily to see many an Afric maid,
On the Ocean's shore, all adorned with gold.
584. And the Sea-escaped began from their seines to share,
On the jetsam of the waves,[3] jewels, treasures old,

[1] *Wit-rôd* (*râd*), *Zauberstrasse*, says Dietrich, which I have adopted. *Wite-rod*, "the rod of punishment," is the other reading; and this seems to parallel what follows.

[2] Or take *fâmigbôsma* (as Grein) as the nominative, and translate: "Then the foamy-bosomed smote the flood-wards"; *i.e.* the waves, coming in crested with foam and driven by the wind, smote on the walls of sea which guarded on either side the path. The other reading, which makes God strike with His old sword the foaming walls of sea is, in my opinion, not only the most poetical, but the most in accord with the rest of this poet's work.

[3] *On yÑlâfe*, "on the leaving of the waves," that is, "on the shore." *Jetsam*, a word half French, half Scandinavian, that which is cast overboard or, after a wreck, by mariners on the coast. I venture to use it then for the sand which makes the beach, which is cast up by the waves.

Bucklers and breast-armour. Justly fell to them,
Gold and goodly web, Joseph's store of riches,
Glorious wealth of Warriors; but its Wardens[1] lay
On the stead of death, strongest of all nations.

[1] *Werigend*, "the defenders, the wardens;" hence those who had, as masters, kept guard over the Hebrews; their enslavers, or here, perhaps, their pursuers. Or, it might refer back to the treasures of the Egyptians, "the defenders of these treasures lay dead," and, as the Egyptians are throughout the poem called the hoard-wards, this is the most likely meaning.

CHAPTER XIX

THE "DANIEL" AND "CHRIST AND SATAN"

THE *Daniel* follows the *Exodus* in the Junian Manuscript, and is in the same handwriting as the *Genesis* and *Exodus*. It is a long poem of 765 lines, and its end is wanting. The writer wished, I think, to connect it with the *Exodus*, and there is an introduction of some forty verses which takes up the history of the Israelites at the Exodus, and sketches it as far as the appearance of Nebuchadnezzar on the scene. After that the poet paraphrases, with some closeness, and with much dryness, those portions of the book of Daniel which have to do with the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, the story of the three children, and the feast of Belshazzar. There is scarcely any dialogue to enliven the story, and though the text of the Bible is treated with some freedom, the freedom is unrelieved by a single touch of imagination. It is a dreary poem. How any one in the world can say, as some have said, that the *Daniel* was written by the same poet who wrote the *Exodus* or the *Genesis*, passes belief. The only passages which have any life are those which are borrowed from the Song of the Three Children in the Apocrypha, and this, with other interpolations, has been partly worked into the *Daniel* from the *Azarias* of the Exeter Book.[1] I have already drawn attention to the threefold translation — varied into three different aspects of nature — of the phrase which concerns the cooling wind which blew in the fiery furnace. This is the one oasis in the desert of *Daniel*. As to its date, some say that it was written after Ælfric, others that it belongs to the time of Ælfred. Its inferiority makes us say that it does not matter a pin when it was written.

It is another matter when we come to the second part of the poems which pass under the name of Caedmon, and which are

[1] The text supposes that the first seventy-five lines of the *Azarias* were worked into the *Daniel*. But the more probable supposition is that the *Azarias* was a *rifacimento* of a portion of the *Daniel*.

in a different and later handwriting from the first part. Grein has given to this collection of psalm-like poems the name of *Christ and Satan*. They are a kind of *Paradise Regained*. They treat, first, of the Fall of the Angels; secondly, of the Harrowing of Hell, of the Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, and the Judgment Day; and thirdly, of the Temptation. The first, second, and third poems are not (and the best German critics agree in this) one poem, but three fragments of separate poems. Groschopp, who has treated of them in a distinct work, considers them to be three fragments taken out of one united poem, which a later "restorer" has attempted to bring into a unity of his own. There are but few who think that he has proved his point. The great interest of his labour lies in this — that his investigation of the language of the poems makes it more than probable that they are older than the rest of those contained in the Junian MS. He even supposes, from the antique form of the Anglo-Saxon, and from the resemblance of the subjects treated to those mentioned in Baeda's account of Caedmon's works, that we may have here some of the work of the Caedmon of Baeda.[1] Wülker disagrees with him, and thinks that Ten Brink's view that the *Christ and Satan* is later than Cynewulf much more probable. The extreme simplicity, directness, and rude passion of the narrative, make it likely, in my opinion, that this set of poems is earlier than the rest of the book, except, perhaps, some portions of *Genesis*. Dialogue, which has died out in *Exodus* and *Daniel*, and the representation of a situation in long speeches rather than in description, return upon us in these poems.[2] The human interest is thus made greater; nor are the characters ill-sustained. They are, at least, alive; and this is especially true of Satan, whose character, as painted here, is more various, more the object of the writer's pity, more full of regret for all he has lost, even for those he has led with him to ruin, than the Satan of *Genesis B*. The poetry has a clear clang, a sharp descriptiveness which is nearer to oral than to written verse. After the dreary waste of *Daniel* it is a comfort to come upon this rugged, varied and somewhat primæval mountain side of song.

[1] The first three parts of the first poem on the Fall of the Angels, as if they were separately made, end with three similar hymns of praise. They are like three lays, into which a Scôp might divide his one subject, to be sung on three separate evenings; and such may have been the form of some of Caedmon's religious songs. The others, too, may be separate *Cantatas*, within a general paraphrase of the history of redemption.

[2] This has, however, nothing to do with their supposed antiquity.

The description of hell has some new elements in it, and these seem, though I do not wish to make too much of this, to belong to a time when the Northern idea of the realm of the dark death-goddess Hel had begun to be influenced by the Christian Hell. If that conception mingled at all with the hell now before us, we might be able to suggest a conjectural date for this poem. The Northern *Helle* is not a place of punishment or filled with fire, nor is it dwelt in by the evil only. All go down to it save the heroes who die in battle — even Brynhild and Balder. It lies low down to the North, in a pale, mist-world (*Niflheimr*), covered with night, very cold, swept with winds; with gates, a great hall where the goddess dwells, a fountain in the midst where dragons and serpents lie, and twelve roaring rivers, gloomy and joyless. *Muspell* is the fire-world in the South, and no human beings ever pass into it. Various fragments of this conception appear in the hell of this poem. Fire-breathing dragons are at its gates, and serpents swarm in it. There is a hall in it, in which Satan wanders like Hel. It is cold and dark, and over it broods abysmal cloud. Those who wander in it are black-visaged. These are the heathen fragments. The Christian hell — in which the name of the goddess was changed into the name of a place — is made a realm of fire, like Muspell, but unlike Muspell is filled with human souls as well as demons. This place is vigorously described in these poems. It is sunk deep in the lowest abyss, "underneath high Nesses," a new image in the description of hell. This is twice repeated, and links the conception of the place to the mediæval notion of the last pit of hell. Below these, as if on their strand, the fiends sometimes assemble and mourn. The cliffs stand round a "deep, tossing, and weltering sea of fire, greedy and ravenous — a loathsome lair." This heaving and leaping sea is Hell's floor — "an ocean mingled with venom and with venom kindled." Serpents move in it and twine round naked men; adders and dragons dwell in it (in *Judith* hell is called a "hall of serpents"); its wind-swept hall is filled with anguish. The devils wander to and fro in it howling in woe; and twelve miles beyond the gates of this narrow realm of hate the gnashing of their teeth is heard in the abyss of space. The gates are huge, dragons sit at them, and they are fast shut and immovable, save when Christ comes upon them, when they are battered down to the noise of thunder at dawn. When Satan speaks, fire and poison fly from his lips with his words, and flicker through hell, and he is as restless in hell as he is said

to be on earth in the book of Job. The very distance from Palestine is given. Hell is 100,000 miles below the Mount of the Temptation. This is as definite as Dante. Much of this is freshly imagined, and its possible nearness to heathen thought gives it a greater interest than the later mediæval conceptions possess.

The first poem, *The Fall of the Angels*, begins with a praise of God as Creator, and with a sketch of the fall of Satan into hell. Then the "Old One" wails for his loss of heaven, and for the fiery ruin in which he lives. He is far more convinced of his sin than the audacious devil of *Genesis*. "I may never hope," he cries, "to have again the better home I lost through pride." A new motive is now introduced. In the *Genesis* all his companions love him and are on his side. Here they reproach and scorn him. "With lying words thou hast deceived us; God thou wast; thyself wast the Creator — so thou saidst; a wretched robber art thou now, fast bound in bands of fire." Another curious phrase is the following, where we meet with the Son of the devil, as if in heaven he had imitated God and sent his son forth as master. "Full surely thou saidst that thy son was the creator of man; all the greater are now thy pains." Again Satan takes up his complaint, and repeats in different phrases the same motive — regret for heaven, hopelessness of return, the present horrors of hell. A third time he takes up the same cry; and then a fourth time, the words flying from him in sparks likest to poison, he bursts out into a passionate agony of vain repentance —

164. O thou Helm of banded hosts! O high glory of the Lord!
O thou might of the great Maker! O thou Middle-Earth!
O thou dazzling day-light! O delight of God!
O ye angel hosts! O thou upper Heaven!
O that I am all bereft of the Everlasting Joy!
That I may not with my hands reach unto the Heaven,
Never with these eyes of mine upwards look again;
Even with mine ears ever hear again
Sounding clear the clang of the clarions of God.

"Woe and torment, exile must I bear, wander a wide wandering in wretchedness and care, for I strove to drive from His throne the Lord of Hosts." This is the first song in the poem, and it ends with an outburst on the poet's part of warning to men, and of a prophecy of the joy of heaven.

The second song of the poem begins at line 225, and is a repetition of the first, save for the expression of Satan's vague hope of God giving him back his seat in heaven; and it ends

as before with a religious psalm of the poet's. A third song begins to the same motive at line 316, and the whole poem ends with another hymn of the bliss of heaven at line 365. These three songs are like three lyrical poems sung at different times to the same theme, and placed in the manuscript one after the other.

The second complete poem of this part of the Junian Caedmon is on the *Harrowing of Hell* and begins at line 366. It is a subject, as I have said, which always attracts the imagination. In this treatment of it, some things are novel and interesting, and seem to belong to an earlier and more simple time than that in which the separate poem in the Exeter Book on the Descent into Hell was written. Speeches rather than dialogue fill it, and its scenery is vivid and well arranged.

It begins with a sketch of the fall of Lucifer into hell, and then breaks abruptly into the subject. Anguish came on hell, thundercrash before the Judge, as he bowed and shattered the gate of hell, but joy was in the heart of men (that is, of the good spirits in prison) when they saw the Saviour. But full of horror were the fiends, wailing far and wide through the windy hall. "Terrible is this, since the Storm has come to us, the Hero with his following, the Lord of Angels. Before him shines a lovelier light than we have ever seen, since we were on high among the Angels. So will now our pains be deeper." Then — for now the poet repeats his motive in order to introduce the speech of Eve, — then came the Angel-cry, loud thunder at the break of day. The Lord had overcome his foes — warfeud was open on that morning, when he came to lead forth the chosen souls of Adam's race. Yet Eve could not look upon the glow of joy till she had spoken, and her speech occupies nearly forty lines. It may mark the early origin of the poem, that the important place among the souls in Hades is given to a woman. She tells the story well; she makes picture after picture of hell before the Saviour's coming. He listens courteously to the end. She begins with the story of their fall, speaking for Adam and herself. "Our guilt was bitterly recompensed; thousands of winters have we wandered in this hot hell, dreadfully burning. But now, I beseech thee, Prince of Heaven, that I with all my kinsfolk may go up from hence. Three nights ago came a servant of the Saviour (this is Judas) home to hell. Fast is he now in prison, yet he told us that God Himself would enlighten this house of hell, our dwelling." Then, from this happy invention of Judas, his message and his fate, she turns to describe how the news was received by all the Old Testament saints waiting in hell.

432. Then uplifted each himself, on his arm he set himself,
On his hands he leant. Though the hellish Horror
Full of awfulness appeared, yet was every one
Midst their pains delighted, since the Prince of men
Willed their home to seek, help to bring to them.

Then she reached out her hands and besought the King of Heaven through the office of Mary. "Thou wert in truth, O my beloved Lord, born into the world of my daughter, now it is plain that thou art God."

She ended, and Christ, driving the fiends deeper into hell, took upwards with him all the host of the redeemed. "That was fair indeed, when they came to their fatherland, and with them the Eternal to his glorious burg. Holy prophets put forth their hands and lifted them into home," and they sat down to feast. Then, as in an assembly of English nobles, Christ rose and made his speech to them — and the phrase with which he begins recalls the Witan: "Wise spirits" he says, and in his turn he gives another account of the fall and of its punishment: "O 'twas woe to me," he cries, "that the work of my hands should endure the chain of the prison-house. Then I came on earth and died. Well it was for you that the warriors pierced me with spears upon the gallows tree." So spake the Ward of Glory on the morning of the Resurrection. The poem turns then to describe the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, and the Last Judgment, and each fragment closes with a separate outbreak of religious warning and joy. As in the previous part, this similar ending suggests that these were each isolated songs, here collected and placed together by a later editor. There is nothing in them of any special worth.

At line 665, another fragment of a separate poem, inserted out of its historical place, relates a part of the story of the Temptation. It is only remarkable for the mocking speech of Christ when he repels the tempter on the mountain, such a speech as an English warrior might have made to his foe: "Go, accursed, to the den of punishment, but I bid thee take no jot of hope to the burghers of Hell; but promise them the deepest of all sorrows; go down, and know how far and wide away is dreary Hell. Measure it with thine hands, and grip against its bottom. Go, till thou knowest all the round of it; from above to the abyss measure how broad is the black mist of it. Then wilt thou understand that thou fightest against God. Go with speed, and before two hours are passed, thou shalt have measured thine allotted house!"

So he fell down to dreadful pains — down towards hell, and

first he measured with his hands the torment and the woe, and then (as he descended) the lurid flame smote upwards and against him, and then he saw the captives lie below him in hell, and then the howl of the demons reached his ear when they saw the unholy one return, and then he on the bottom stood. And when he was there it seemed to him that to hell door from the place where he had been was 100,000 miles by measure. And he looked round on the ghastly place, and there rose a shriek from all the lost, and they cried aloud to the Lord of their kingdom —

733. There! be ever thou in evil! Erst thou wouldst not good.

With this fine passage close the poems that bear the name of Caedmon. Whatever their several dates be, they are a noble beginning to English song. Whoever be their several writers, they owe their impulse to the man who on that night took care of the cattle in the monastery of Hild. Honour from all the English race, from all the poets, greatest of the English race, is due to his name. He was the first (and I borrow some of Ebert's phrases) who, like a Scôp singing heroic tales, sang to the people in their own tongue the tales of the Old Testament and the subject-matters of Christianity. He showed how this new material might be assimilated by the genius of the people. He made the bridge which led to the artistic poetry which begins, after him, to handle the same subjects. The old singers of heathendom, crossing it, became the new singers of Christianity.

CHAPTER XX

"JUDITH" AND OTHER CAEDMONIAN POEMS

THE followers of Caedmon were many, Baeda says, and the phrase proves that there was a number of Northumbrian poems on Christian subjects at the time of Baeda's death in 735. Some of these poets adopted, no doubt, Caedmon's method, which may have been hymnic, and among them there were simple paraphrasers of the Sacred Books, men who sang only for the monastery and not for the mead-hall. But there were others, as we see plainly from the *Exodus*, who, while they followed him, passed far beyond simple narration. They conceived their subject in somewhat of a Saga fashion, and recited their work to please the warriors, the king, the thegns, and the freemen as they sat in the hall at the mead. The religious element is of course introduced, and the poem, half war, half religion, touching heathendom with one hand and Christianity with the other, equally excited and instructed the feasters.

Of this type is the *Judith:* a poem of the cycle of Caedmon, written, it is most likely, in Northumbria, and which we may perhaps roughly date at about the middle of the eighth century. Had this long and important piece of work been by Caedmon, as some have said, it would not, I think, have been omitted from Baeda's catalogue of the poet's work, nor passed over without a distinct reference, among the *plurimae sacrae scripturae historiae* which he ascribes to Caedmon. Moreover, the form in which the poem is cast, its unity of story which can be discerned even in the portion left to us, its careful composition and its rhythmical changes[1] bear witness to a time

[1] The writer of *Judith*, like the writer of *Genesis B*, has frequent recourse to those long swelling lines when he is excited, which, while retaining the three alliterative stresses — two in the first half of the line, one in the second; sometimes only one in the first half — allowed the poet to insert at the beginning of each half line as many unaccented syllables as he chose. Hence the third letter-stress is almost always on the last word but one of the line.

when poetry had added to its early simplicity a more artistic method, such as, for example, we find in the *Exodus*.

The same uncertainty as to date which belongs to the greater number of Anglo-Saxon poems belongs also to *Judith*. The dates given by well-known scholars range over three hundred years, from the seventh to the tenth century. This is enough to show that we have no clear criterion in our hands. The various conjectures will be found drawn together, with an exhaustive treatment of the poem itself, in a book written by Mr. Cook, who puts forward an interesting suggestion with regard to the origin of the *Judith*.[1] He thinks it was composed in gratitude for the deliverance of Wessex from the fury of the Northmen, and dedicated to Judith, the stepmother of Ælfred, the great-granddaughter of Charles the Great, whom, in her charming youth, Æthelwulf brought to England as his wife in the year 856. Her name, her joyous reception by the people and her beauty suggested the choice of the subject, and it may have been written by Swithhun, Bishop of Winchester, Æthelwulf's friend and teacher. The arguments by which he strengthens this theory deserve consideration, but the poem still remains for me a Northumbrian poem of the beginning or the middle of the eighth century; after Baeda's death, and before the times of anarchy and decay. There is no melancholy note in the poem. It exists only in a single manuscript, the same in which the *Beowulf* has been handed down to us. The several parts of the poem are headed with numbers, and we possess fourteen lines of section ix., and the whole of sections x. xi. xii. These together reach to 350 lines. The other books are lost — that is, about three-fourths of the poem. It was then an important piece of about 1400 lines in all, and I say again that had a poem of this length and power been in existence while Baeda was alive, he would probably have mentioned it when he spoke of the followers of Caedmon, or as Caedmon's own, had Caedmon written it.

The tenth book begins with a vigorous description of a great drinking feast given by Holofernes which lasts the whole day till all the Captains are furiously drunk. As to Holofernes, he seems to be drawn direct from some English chief, well known for drinking prowess. "He laughed and shouted and raged so that all his folk heard far away how the stark-minded stormed and yelled, full of fierce mirth and mad with mead." He bids Judith be led to his tent. A golden

[1] *Judith*. Albert S. Cook, Professor of English Language and Literature in the University of California. Boston, Heath and Co.

fly-net hangs between his bed and the drinking chamber, so that he could see the guests, but they might not look on him. Drunk, he fell on his bed, and Judith steps forth, with plaited tresses. And she held a sharp sword, hardened by the storms (*scurum*) of battle, "drew it from the sheath, and called on the Ward of Heaven — God the creator, spirit of consolation." The prayer is nobly wrought, brief and forceful, full of passion — passion for her country and her God, passion of the woman brought so near to shame. "Let me hew down," it ends, "this lord of murder! Venge thou, O God, that which is so angry in me, the burning in my heart." The slaughter is then carefully described. Her cleverness, as she seizes the heathen by the hair and fits him for the blow; her strength, as she drives the glittering sword half through his throat, and then again smites the heathen dog, half dead, till his head rolled out upon the floor, are as vigorously hewn into the verse as the sword into Holofernes. "There lay the foul carcase, but the spirit turned to go to the deep abyss, and was battened down, with pangs, with worms enwound in that snake-hall."

Book xi. then takes Judith and her "pale-cheeked maid," with the head in their bag, out of the sleeping camp, till they see the "shining walls of fair Bethulia. There sat on the ramparts the burghers, watching, and Judith called to them, and the folk ran to the gate, men with women, crowding together; stormed and raced, old and young in thousands, to meet the divine maid." She bids her girl unwrap the bloody head, and Joan of Arc could not have made a more impassioned, a more warlike speech —

177. Clearly may ye now, conquering heroes strong;
O ye leaders of the people, (looking) stare upon the head
Of this heathen lord of fight, of this loathliest (of men),
Holofernes, now unliving,
Who of all men made most of murderous woes for us!
185. . . . . By the help of God
I have wrenched his life away. Now will I bid each of you
Each burg-dweller to the battle.
189. Fit ye for the fighting! When the God of first beginnings,
Merciful and monarch,[1] eastward makes arise
Bright the blaze of day, bear your lindens forward then,
Shield-board sheltering your breast, byrnies for your raiment,
Helmets all a-shining, midst that horde of scathers;
Felling the folk-leaders with the flashing swords,
Chieftains cursed for death! (Courage!) all your foes
To the death are doomed! Ye shall have dominion,

[1] *Arfaest cyning*, "glorious king"; but *ar* has also the sense of compassion.

Gain a glory in the battle; as the greatest Lord
Hath a handsel given through mine hand to you.

Then the host of swift ones speedily was readied; all the warriors bold as kings, all the comrades, bore their victory banners, fared into the fight; forward in right line they moved; all the heroes under helm from the holy burg at the breaking of the day. Din there was of shields, loud they rang; and the gaunt wolf of the weald rejoiced, and the black raven, greedy of slaughter. Well they knew both of them that the heroes thought to count out death to the doomed;[1] and upon their track flew the Earn, hungry for its fodder; all its feathers dewy; dusky was its sallow coat; horny-nebbed, he sang his battle-song. Swiftly stepped the chiefs of battle to the field of carnage, with the hollow lindens sheltered. . . . Then they let, with valiancy, showers of their arrows fly, adders of the battle from their bows of horn, hard-headed bolts. Loudly stormed the warriors fierce, and their spears they sent, right into the host of hard ones. . . . So the Hebrews showed their foes what the sword-swing was.

By this time the Assyrian host is roused, and Book xii. relates how the messengers came from the outskirts of the host to the chief thegns, and how they roused the standard-bearing warrior; and how they took counsel whether they dared to wake Holofernes. Too much at this crisis is made of this poor motive. They gather round their lord's tent. No noise awakens him. At last, one bolder than the rest breaks in, and lo! pale lay his gold-giver on the bed, robbed of life. "Here lies," he cries, "headless, hewn down by sword, our Upholder." All their weapons fall; they fly; behind them urges a mighty folk; the Hebrew heroes "hew a path with swords through the press, thirsty for the onset of the spear." So fell in dust the nobles of Assyria, left to "the will of the wolves, fodder for the fowls of slaughter." Then is told the gathering of the spoil. "Proud, with plaited locks, the Hebrews brought precious treasures to Bethulia's shining burg — helms and hip-seaxes, bright-gray byrnies, and panoplies of warriors inlaid with gold. And to Judith, wise and fair of face, they gave the sword and bloody helm, and eke the huge byrnie of Holofernes all with red gold embossed, and his armlets and bright gems. For all this she said praise to the Lord of every folk." Then the poem makes a fair ending, tender and gracious and touched with that

[1] Or, perhaps, "to furnish for them their fill on the doomed."

love of nature which we have so often found among the English.

347.

Glory be for widening ages! To the Lord beloved, for this,
Sky above and spacious earth, Wind and lift He shaped of old,
And the Æther's jubilation — every one of the wild streams,
through His own delightfulness.

Judith is a good, ringing piece of English verse, but I cannot agree with those who place it in the highest rank. It lacks imagination, and its finest passages are somewhat conventional. A man, whom we should call to-day a cultivated man, wrote it. Its form and arrangement are therefore good; its metre and language are excellent, but the creative spirit of poetry does not often say, as the poem moves on, "Let there be light!" Nevertheless, if we wish to compare the poetry of the time before Ælfred with that of the age which followed him, we may understand the vast difference between them by reading the Homily of Ælfric on Judith. That homily is in a loose alliterative verse. If our *Judith* touches a prosaic note now and again, so that we are jarred, Ælfric's verse-homily is nothing but prose. It must be a difficult task to persuade oneself that the date of *Judith* lies in the tenth century.

There still remains to complete this account of the Cædmon cycle of poems the runes upon the Cross of Ruthwell in Annandale, the dying song of Bæda, and the short verse quoted in the letters of Winfrid.[1] Of the separate *Azarias* I have already said enough.

[1] The verse in the letters of Winfrid is scarcely worth mentioning. It is quoted in a letter, not from Boniface himself, but from a monk, and I give Kemble's account of it below. At least it is dated.

"On passing some time lately with my friend, Professor Schmeller of Munich, my attention was called by him to an ancient Saxon proverb quoted in an epistle of St. Boniface, which he had read in the 3d vol. of Pertz' Thesaurus, just published. As it stood in Pertz, it ran thus —

"Oft daed later domae for eldit si gi sitha gahuum suuylt it þiana.

"A very old MS. copy of the same epistle in the Munich library, and like that from which Pertz printed, written in Germany, gave the same, as follows —

"Oft daed latadom aefor eldit si gisitha gahuuem suuylt it þiana.

"On translating this from its half-German, half-Northumbrian dialect, into good plain West Saxon (Anglo-Saxon), I arranged the lines as follows —

"Oft daedlata
dóme forylde∂
sigesi∂a gehwaem:
swylte∂ ∂y ána.

"'Oft doth the dilatory man with justice lose by his delay in every successful undertaking: therefore he dieth lonely.' As this was written by Boniface,

The Runes have been attributed to Caedmon, and the Cross to the seventh century; and Stephens translated the runic inscription on the top of the Cross as "Caedmon me fawed," that is, Caedmon had, he thought, himself made the verses on the Cross.[1] But the Cross, so far as its make goes, might have been set up during the seventh, eighth, or the beginning of the ninth century; and as to the Runes — there were runes carved on stones after the Norman Conquest. Neither the

or to call him by his Anglo-Saxon name, Winfriδ, in the early half of the eighth century, it is one of the earliest pieces of Saxon poetry on record. It shares the character of the Saxon proverbs generally; viz. that of a solemn gnomic saying, treasured probably as a wise rule of life. Winfriδ quotes it as well known, and therefore as earlier than his own period. On this account it may perhaps be placed by the side of the verses cited by Baeda in his last moments. . . ." — J. M. Kemble, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1836, June, p. 611.

[1] It is possible that the inscriber took some phrases out of a poem of Caedmon's which had been worked over afterwards by another writer, perhaps by Cynewulf; and meant by his inscription, "These lines are by Caedmon." But it is just as likely that *Caedmon*, which, odd as it is, may have become a Northumbrian name, is the name of the sculptor of the Cross. On the Anglo-Saxon Cross at Brussels the maker's name is written: "*Drahmal* me worhte." I place the translation of the Ruthwell Runes side by side with their parallels from the *Dream* —

Ruthwell Cross.	*Dream of Cross.*
geredae hinae god almechttig	39. Ongyrede hine þa geong haeleδ (þaet waes god aelmihtig)
þa he walde on galgu gistiga	strang and stiδmod; gestah he on
modig fore *allae* men	gealgan heanne
þug	modig on manigra gesyhδe. . . .
5. ic riicnae kyninge	44. Rod waes ic araered: ahof ic ricne cyning
heafunaes hlafard	heofona hlaford, hyldan me ne
haelda ic *ni* darstae	dorste.
bismaeradu ungcet men ba aet gadre	. . . .
ic *waes* blodi bistemi*d*	48. Bysmeredon hie unc butu aetgaedere. Eall ic waes mid blode bestemed
bigote*n o*f	begoten of þaes guman sidan. . . .
Crist waes on rodi	56. . . . Crist waes on rode.
hweþrae þer fusae	Hwaeδere þaer fuse feorran cwoman
fearran cwomu	To þam aeδelinge: ic þaet eall beheold.
aeþþilae til anum	Sare ic waes mid *sorgum* gedrefed,
ic þaet al be*heald*	hnag ic hwaeδre þam secgu*m* to hande.
s*are* ic waes miþ sorgu*m* gi*draefid*	
h*nag*	
miþ strelum giwundaed	62. Eall ic waes mid straelum forwundod.
alegdun hiae hinae limwaerignae	Aledon hie δaer limwerigne, gestodon him aet his lices heafdu*m*;
gistoddun him *aet* h*is li*caes *heafdum*	beheoldon hie þaer heofenes dryhten. . . .
*bi*heal*d*du*n* hi*ae* per h*eafun*	

stone nor its writing then say anything certain concerning the age of the inscription. Kemble and Dietrich, on the other hand, reject altogether the view that the runic verses are by Caedmon. Kemble translated them. The inscription, he says, is in the usual Anglo-Saxon runes, and in the dialect which was spoken in Northumbria in the eighth and ninth centuries; and he finds their original in several passages in the *Dream of the Holy Rood*, passages which I have placed opposite to their runic resemblances on p. 144. That *Dream* has been allotted to Cynewulf by Dietrich and many others; and it is argued then that the lines on the Cross are Cynewulf's, and that the Cross is not earlier than the end of the eighth century. But it is a further question whether Cynewulf wrote the *Dream of the Rood*, and if he did not, we cannot for certain say that the Runes on the Ruthwell Cross are so late as the end of the eighth century. The matter then is open to debate; and if, as I think, the *Dream of the Rood* contains an old poem worked up by Cynewulf, and if the lines on the Ruthwell Cross belong to this old poem, it is just possible that the lines were written by Caedmon himself, or by some one of his school. Whoever wrote this poem, it became famous, and certain passages in it were used for inscriptions on crosses and relics. It is not only on the Ruthwell Cross that we find lines quoted from it. It seems to have supplied some words, or at least some suggestion for an inscription which has been found on a reliquary of the true cross in the treasure chamber of St. Gudule at Brussels, the latest history and criticism of which have been written by Dr. Logeman of Utrecht University.[1] This inscription exists on a thin plate of silver which ran round the reliquary; and here is Logeman's arrangement of it. It is not in runes but in Roman letters, and is probably of the tenth century. "*Rod is min nama geo ic ricne cyning baer,*[2] *byfigynde blode bestemed.*[3] *Thas rode het Æthlmaer wyrican ȝ Adhelwold hys berotho; Criste to lofe, for Ælfrices saule hyra berothor.*" — "Rood is my name; long ago I bore a goodly king; trembling, dripping with blood. Æthlmaer bade work this rood, and Adhelwold his brother. To the glory of Christ, for the soul of Ælfric their brother!" On the back of the Cross the artist has placed his name — "*Drahmal me worhte*" (Drahmal wrought

[1] L'Inscription Anglo-Saxonne du Reliquaire de la Vraie Croix" au Trésor de l'Église des S.S. Michel-et-Gudule, à Bruxelles. — 1891, Londres, Luzac et Cie, 46 Great Russell Street.

[2] "Rod waes ic araered: ahof ic ricne cyning." — *Dream of Rood*, l. 44.

[3] "Eall ic waes mid blode bestemed." — *Dream of Rood*, l. 48.

me). The phrases "*blode bestemed*" and "*ricne cyning*" are from the *Dream;* and the trembling of the rood, and the personal cry of it, are suggested also by the same poem.

I am glad to close this chapter with the verses that Baeda recited on his death-bed, and perhaps in no better place — since I wish to bind up the great scholar with the poetry of England — can I more fitly insert part of that pure and touching story, which, like a solemn evening landscape seen from the hill-top of a long life of faithful work, breathes so quietly the gentle and clear air of death.[1]

"To Cuthwin, my fellow-reader, beloved in Christ, Cuthbert his schoolfellow — Health for ever in the Lord! I have received with much pleasure the small gift you sent to me, and with equal pleasure read your letters . . . in which I found that you carefully celebrate masses and holy prayers for our father and master Baeda, whom God loved. . . . He was much troubled with shortness of breath, yet without pain, before the day of our Lord's resurrection, that is about a fortnight; and after that, he led his life in cheerfulness and joy, giving thanks every night and day — nay, every hour — to Almighty God, till the day of our Lord's ascension, that is the seventh of the calends of June (26th May), and daily read lessons to us, his disciples. As to the rest of the day, he spent it in singing psalms; but in the night he lay awake, full of praise and delight, save when a short sleep fell on him, but no sooner did he awake than he began at once his wonted exercises, and, with uplifted hands ceased not to give thanks to God. In sooth, I declare that I have never seen with my eyes, or heard with my ears, any man so earnest in giving thanks to the living God. O truly happy man! He chanted the text of the blessed Apostle St. Paul — 'It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' — and much more from holy writ; and also in our tongue — that is in the English tongue, as he was learned in our songs — he said some things. Moreover, he spoke this saying, making it in English —

For þam neodfere nenig wyrðeð
þances snottra þonne him þearf sy
To gehiggene aer his heonen-gange
Hwet his gaste godes oððe yveles
Aefter deaðe heonen demed wurðe

which means, 'No man is wiser than he need be, before this

[1] The following account of Baeda's death occurs in a letter written by one of his pupils to another.

necessary departure, that is, to think, before the soul go hence, what good or evil it hath done, and how it is to be judged after its departure.' "

So far writes Cuthbert, Baeda's pupil, on this part of his master's dying hours. I give an accurate translation of the Anglo-Saxon, and place below, in a note, the old Northumbrian of the little song.[1] It will be found in Sweet's *Oldest English Texts* —

Before the need-faring no one becomes
Wiser in thought than behoves him to be,
To the out-thinking, ere his hencegoing,
What to his ghost, of good or of evil,
After his death, shall be doomed (in the end).

[1] Fore there neidfaerae naenig uuiurthit
thoncsnottura than him thar[f] sie,
to ymbhycggannae, aer his hiniong[a]e,
huaet his gastae godaes aeththa yflaes,
aefter ðeothðaege doemid uueorth [a]e.
MS., *St. Gall.* 254.

CHAPTER XXI

NORTHUMBRIAN LITERATURE OTHER THAN ENGLISH

From 670 to the death of Baeda —735

The death of Oswiu and the accession of Ecgfrith in 670 are probably coincident with the first verses by which Caedmon began the religious poetry of England and founded the school of whose writings I have now given an account. About the same date, or a little before it, the Latin learning and literature of Northumbria began, and it flourished till the coming of the Danes. The history of this is, as far as the death of Baeda, the subject of this chapter.

English poetry has two distinct periods, the first of which belongs to the time of the glory of Northumbria, and the second to the time of its anarchy and decay. The first is bound up with the school of Caedmon, and may be said to close with the death of Baeda. The second, hereafter to be treated, may be collected round the name of Cynewulf. One is unconscious of sorrow and regret; the other is deeply conscious of both. There was then a division of sentiment, answering partly to a change in the fortunes of the kingdom, which breaks into two branches English Verse in Northumbria. There is no such break in the history of Latin literature in the North. It was only slowly affected by the internal troubles of the kingdom. Pursued in its monastic centres, apart from the strife of kings and pretenders, by men whom all sides honoured, concentrated finally in the ecclesiastical and political capital of the North where it was safest from disturbance and most easily patronised, it lived through all the anarchy, and may even have continued a miserable existence after the Danes had taken and settled in York. York was its last refuge.

It may be said to have begun in the reign of Ecgfrith, when Wilfrid obtained possession of the See of York, when he built new churches at Ripon and Hexham and founded their

libraries, and when Benedict Biscop set up his monastery of Wearmouth in 674. Benedict, however, far more than Wilfrid, was the real founder of the Latin school; the true source of all that Northumbrian learning which, passing through Baeda and the scholars of York, restored to life, by English voices, the letters and sciences of Europe. He had brought to Northumbria the knowledge and arts he had acquired at Rome, and the methods of teaching he had practised with Theodore at Canterbury. In a few years, as we have already seen, he had collected two brother libraries at Wearmouth and Jarrow, founded one great school in these monasteries, and started science and literature on the path over which his scholar Baeda led them to a greater glory. In a long life he was never inactive in the cause of learning and beauty. Architecture, painting, music, glassmaking, embroidery were part of his religion. When ill and sleepless, he lessened the weariness of the night and soothed his pain by the reading of the Scriptures, and chiefly of the patience of Job. He was half palsied, and no wonder, for he had made five times that terrible journey to Rome, the woes of which seemed, however, as nothing to the eagerness of this great collector. No man did more for the materials of Northumbrian learning, and it is not uninteresting to contrast this impassioned traveller with his scholar Baeda, who never left, save for a visit or two to York, the shelter of his monastery. When Benedict Biscop died in 690, Aldfrith was reigning, and this king's West Saxon and Irish learning gave a fresh impulse to Northumbrian culture.[1] He had a ready inspirer and helper in Abbot Ceolfrid, Biscop's successor at Wearmouth and Jarrow. The school of Ceolfrid became famous. The Pope asked his advice on ecclesiastical questions. Naiton, King of the Picts, desired a letter from him concerning the Roman tonsure and time of celebrating Easter, and this tractate, which Baeda gives in full, places him with justice among clear and vigorous writers. Baeda himself wrote his life, and a delightful piece of literature it is. There is no better picture of the daily life of an English monastery.

Both he and King Aldfrith are further connected by their literary relation to the book in which Adamnan of Iona gave

[1] Aldfrith, we are told by Baeda in the *Life of Cuthbert*, "in insulis Scotorum ob studium literarum exulabat" — "in regionibus Scotorum lectioni operam dabat" — "ipse ob amorem sapientiae spontaneum passus exilium." Malmesbury (26) gives the same testimony, and Eddius calls him *rex sapientissimus*. Wilfrid trained him also, and he was a fellow-pupil of Ealdhelm.

an account of Arculf's journey to the Holy Land, the first of those books which in this country awakened the desire of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Arculf, shipwrecked on the west coast, found his way to Iona, and dictated to Adamnan his voyage and adventures. Adamnan, who had been the tutor of Aldfrith, brought him the book, sure of his interest and patronage. The King received it eagerly, sent it on to Ceolfrid, had many copies made of it, and dispersed them about Northumbria. The book is still preserved, and became popular in Europe through Baeda's abridgment of it, and through the extracts he made from it in the *Ecclesiastical History*. Ceolfrid also saw Adamnan and received him at Wearmouth on his second visit to Northumbria. It may be that Adamnan mingled with the discussion which then converted him to the observance of the Roman Easter some account of the *Life of St. Columba* which he compiled at Iona in the last decade of the seventh century. Baeda, however, does not seem to have been acquainted with this important book.

Some time later, after 709, Wilfrid's biography was written by his well-tried friend and companion, Eddius Stephanus. This book, composed in an excellent style, is of the greatest help to the history of the Northumbrian Church in the seventh century. It is worthy also of other remembrance, because it is the first biography written in England [1] — the first of a class of literature in which, though rarely, we have excelled. Another name of this time, linked to Hild, whose scholar he was; to Wilfrid, for he became Bishop of Hexham and of York; to Theodore, under whom he studied; and to Baeda, whom he ordained; is John of Beverley, whom we remember best from the fair minster which in after ages bore his name. He loved magnificence when he played the great bishop's part, but he loved solitude even more. The man of the world was frequently merged in the anchorite. He had a solitary oratory on the top of the Earn's-Howe, a hill on the Tyne, to which he often retired from Hexham. It is curious to meet this reversion to the Celtic feeling of his youth, and we owe to it the founding of Beverley. In a region, as desolate then as it is now thickly populated, John chose in the midst of the woods and waters of Underwood a solitary meadow with a tiny church, round which the river Hull, delaying its speed, had been dammed by the beavers who afterwards gave the spot its name.

[1] Another biography, and written about the same time, is the *Life of St. Cuthbert* by a nameless writer, which was done and kept at Lindisfarne, and which Baeda used.

Here, as he had done at Hexham and York, he kept up a school of learning, to which a host of persons, both lay and clerical, resorted.[1] One other name is sufficiently bound up with literature to be mentioned here — Acca, Wilfrid's closest friend, the most devoted supporter of his plans. Wilfrid nominated him to be Abbot of Hexham just before his death. In the same year, 709, he became bishop, and he ruled the See for twenty-three years. He was as fond of architecture as of music. He finished the three churches near Hexham which Wilfrid had begun. Baeda praises his skill in ecclesiastical music. He was another of the great collectors of books; the library at Hexham was famous. If he did not write himself, he caused others to write. It was he who urged Eddius to compose the *Life of Wilfrid*. He pressed Baeda to begin a commentary on St. Luke; and Baeda addressed to him his commentary on St. Mark, a poem on the Last Day, and perhaps the Hexameron.

These are the chief names among a number of persons who spread Latin learning and literature at this early time over Northumbria. That learning, however, if it were to attain consistence and directive power, needed to be gathered together and generalised by a man of some genius. In Baeda of Jarrow the man was found. He made in himself a reservoir into which all the isolated streams of learning flowed. He added to them waters of his own which he had drawn from all the then known sources of learning in the past, and he distributed in channels hewn by himself all that he had collected, not only over England but, after his death, over Europe. And this was done just in time. The knowledge Baeda left behind him was concentrated in the mind of Alcuin, and reached the court and kingdom of Charles the Great exactly at the right moment — when Charles was extending his power far and wide, when he desired to unite his various tribes and peoples by an intellectual as well as a spiritual force. It was a great work, but the means whereby it was done had been stored up in the studious years which Baeda had filled at Jarrow with unremitting work.

The chief information which we have of his life is given by himself at the end of the *Ecclesiastical History*. "Baeda, a servant of God and priest of the monastery of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, which is at Wearmouth and Jarrow, who, being born in the lands of the same monastery, was, at seven years old, handed over to be educated by the most reverend Abbat Bene-

[1] Baeda's tale of one of John's miracles gives us a vivid picture of a part of the life of these schools attached to a monastery. — Book v. c. vi.

dict, and afterwards by Ceolfrid;[1] and, passing all the rest of my life in that monastery, wholly gave myself to the study of Scripture, and to the observance of the regular discipline and of daily chanting in the church, and had always great delight in learning and teaching and writing.[2] When I was nineteen years old, I received deacon's orders, and when I was thirty those of the priesthood, and both were conferred on me by Bishop John and by order of Abbat Ceolfrid. From which time till I was fifty-nine years of age, I made it my business, for the use of me and mine, to gather together out of the writings of the venerable Fathers, and to interpret, according to their sense, these following pieces:"[3] — and here follows a list

[1] I quote here the admirable summary of the means of education which fell to the lot of Baeda in Bishop Stubbs' article in the *Dict. Eccles. Biography:* "Under the liberal and enlightened administration of Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith, Bede enjoyed advantages which could not perhaps have been found anywhere else in Europe at that time; perfect access to all the existing sources of learning in the West. Nowhere else could he acquire at once the Irish, the Roman, the Gallican, and the Canterbury learning; the accumulated stores of books which Benedict had bought at Rome and Vienne; or the disciplinary instruction drawn from the monasteries of the Continent as well as from the Irish missionaries. Amongst his friends and instructors were Trumbert, the disciple of St. Chad, and Sigfrid, the fellow-pupil of St. Cuthbert under Boisil and Eata; from these he drew the Irish knowledge of Scripture and discipline. Acca, Bishop of Hexham and pupil of St. Wilfrid, furnished him with the special lore of the Roman school, martyrological and other; his monastic learning, strictly Benedictine, came through Benedict Biscop, through Lerins and the many continental monasteries his master had visited; and from Canterbury, with which he was in friendly correspondence, he probably obtained instruction in Greek, in the study of the Scriptures, and other more refined learning. His own monastery was a place of rest and welcome for all learned strangers, such as Abbot Adamnan." I must mention a second time, in this connection, the literary friends whom he quotes as his authorities at the beginning of the *Ecclesiastical History*. Albinus, Hadrian's pupil; Nothhelm, who worked for him at Rome; Daniel of Winchester, and Forthhere of Malmesbury, who brought to him, I suppose, the works of Ealdhelm, which had their own influence on Northumbrian literature; Esi from East Anglia; Cynibert from Lindsey; the monks of many monasteries, and chiefly those of Lastingham who gave him the traditions of Cedda and Ceadda — poured each their knowledge into Baeda's ear. Kings gave him their friendship — Aldfrith and Ceolwulf to whom he dedicates his history. He had friends and correspondents in various parts of Europe, and a host of visitors going and coming for many years filled the cell at Jarrow with the experience of many men and many lands.

[2] It is said that he declined to be made Abbot of Wearmouth on the ground that the care of a great house distracted the mind from the pursuits of learning.

[3] The list of works seems to be "with some important exceptions, in the reverse order of their composition." The first written are probably the *Ars Metrica*, the *De Natura rerum*, and the *De Temporibus*, and their proper date is from 700–703. These were followed by the *De Sex ætatibus sæculi* — an admirable primer of the history of the world — written to be read to Wilfrid about the year 707. The *Commentaries* on almost all the Books of the Old and New Testaments are after 709; for they are dedicated to Acca, Bishop of Hexham, who succeeded Wilfrid in that year. They range over many years. The *Lives of Cuthbert* and of the *Abbats of Wearmouth and Jarrow* were probably written between 716 and 720. The *De Temporum ratione* is dated

of his works, at the end of which is this gracious sentence, "And now, good Jesus, I pray that to whom thou hast granted of thy grace to sweetly partake of the words of thy wisdom and knowledge, thou wilt also vouchsafe that he may at some time or another come to thee, Fount of all wisdom, to stand before thy face for ever, who livest and reignest world without end. Amen."

These are the last words of the book. "Here ends," he says, "by God's help, the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation." It is his greatest work, the book in which he showed that he was more than an industrious compiler; one who had gained that power of choice, of arrangement, of rejection of materials which is necessary to win before building any work of literature into a form which will justly teach and please mankind. This shaping power he had won when he wrote the *Ecclesiastical History*, and with it he possessed also, by virtue of his happy nature, that other power of ornamenting his literary building with clear and fair description of his characters, and with softly-carved and delicate tales. In a slighter way this is also shown in his life of Cuthbert, and, in a graver fashion and on a graver subject, in his letter to Ecgberht, the form of which is admirable.

Along with this much of the "shaping power of imagination," he had a careful love of truth and of testing his materials. He may fairly be called the father of modern history, our first critical historian. He spent a world of time, and employed a host of assistants, in collecting contemporary information. He rarely sets down anything without giving his authorities for it, or without stating that it is without author-

726. The *Ecclesiastical History* was finished in the year 731. After this, shortly before his death, is the *Epistola ad Egbertum;* and on the day of his death he was still employed on his translation into English of the Gospel according to St. John.

Many other things, including Homilies, he wrote, but these are the chief. Most of them are studious epitomes, of great learning, of little originality. The scientific works are mostly derived from Pliny the elder; the grammatical and rhetorical writings prove his large acquaintance with the classic writers then known. He possessed as a scholar Greek and Latin, and he knew "as much Hebrew as he could learn from the writings of Jerome." The Commentaries are a mixture of a calm, clear, sensible, and unaffected teaching of Christian conduct and love with an extravagance of allegorical interpretation. Allegory was then, as it has often been, at times when piety has limited the love of beauty, the safety-valve of the imagination. But the chief burden of the teaching of the Commentaries is morality and love. They preserve that steady piety which has made the practical religion of the English people — "seeking," as Baeda said Cuthbert and Boisil did while they read together the Gospel of St. John, "that simple faith which works by love, nor troubling themselves with minute and subtle questions." Of all these works none can be said to belong properly to literature except the *Lives* of Cuthbert and the Abbats, the *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Letter to Ecgberht*, and perhaps the *Hymns*.

ity. The elaborate account of all the sources of his history to which I have already drawn attention does not stand alone as an example of his conscious pride in his own accuracy. The pains he took to verify his facts is the chief subject of his preface to his prose life of St. Cuthbert. "I have not dared," he says, "to transcribe what I have written without the most careful examination of credible witnesses. Moreover, I inserted the names of my authorities to establish the truth of my narrative. I kept back my book from public reading till I had submitted it to Herefrith and others who had long known the life of this man of God." He then tells how he sent it to Eadfrith of Lindisfarne — that is, to Cuthbert's own monastery. For two days the elders then read and examined it, and pronounced it worthy to be copied. It may be that Eadfrith's criticisms bored him. "Eadfrith," he says, "added many other facts concerning Cuthbert in conversation, but I have not inserted them; the book, after due consideration, I considered to be fully finished." After this *naïve* remark he is equally pleasant about his life of Cuthbert in Latin Hexameters, which Lindisfarne had evidently not as yet cared to possess. The book is dull, but Bæda was pleased with it. "If you wish," he says, "to have these verses, you can get a copy of them from me."

The whole of this belongs to the literary side of his character. He is not critical, it may be said, concerning the miracles he inserts. But in his time miracles were believed to be part of the order of Nature, and they replaced in daily life the legendary stories of the heathen heroes. Indeed, the chief literary value of the *Ecclesiastical History* is to be found in its stories of miraculous events and in its sketches of character. The form of these is excellent, their style of a charming simplicity, their tenderness poetic. The character of Bæda is revealed in the conduct of these tales. The more we read the greater the affection which we feel for him; and the awakening of such an affection is one of the most delicate proofs which a book can give of its being fine literature. Bæda excelled in stories, not by his learning or by his intellectual training, but by the child in him: by the admiration, humility, unconsciousness, trust, and love which led him gladly to believe and delightedly to record his wonders. Moreover, these same qualities enabled him to see with clearness what was best in the men of whom he wrote, and to express it with so much joy and tenderness, so lucidly and so sweetly, that the characters in the *History* stand forth like pictures done by a

painter like Fra Angelico. The images of Eadwine and Coifi, of Oswald and Aidan, of Cuthbert and Ceadda, of Hild and Caedmon, — and I choose only a few, — make us see and love our forefathers. He has the same power elsewhere. The Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, of whom he speaks in his little book upon them, appear as alive before us and win our reverence. The entrance of Eosterwine into the monastic life, the death of Benedict, the departure of Ceolfrid for Rome like Paul from the sea-shore, could not be better done. But the best of these lives is that of Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. Baeda loved his subject, and his love of the man pervades the book with charm, — a charm derived from two delightful but different characters — the character of Baeda the writer and the character of Cuthbert the subject of the book.

This biography is made up of many tales, and most of them are of miracles. It is strange that after such repeated care and the reading of the life by so many persons, no doubt whatever is thrown on any of the miracles told of a man who had died so short a time before. One of them is so curious that Baeda thinks it may be questioned. The passage is marked by his happy simplicity, and yet by a sudden stirring in him of his desire of truth. It illustrates, then, on two sides, his literary character. Cuthbert, troubled by a swelling in his knee, is prescribed for by a man on horseback clothed in white robes and of an honourable aspect. He follows the prescription and gets well. "At once," says Baeda, "he perceived that it was an angel." Then he considers the matter and adds, "If any one think it incredible that an angel should appear on horseback, let him read in the history of the Maccabees," and he alludes to the story of Heliodorus which Raffaelle has so nobly painted. It is also worth saying, for it still further illustrates his literary character, especially as an historian, that, when he is speaking in his own person, he has no knowledge of the miraculous. When he has told the tale of Cuthbert quenching in one day a supernatural as well as a natural fire, he adds, "But I, and those who are like me conscious of our own weakness, can do nothing in that way against material fire." Again, when he speaks of the beasts and birds obeying Cuthbert — "We, for the most part," he says, "have lost our dominion over the creation, for we neglect to obey the Lord." The same careful note steals sometimes into the *Ecclesiastical History*. It represents the struggle, it may be an altogether unconscious struggle, of the temper of the scholar who demands accuracy with the temper of the pious monk to whom the miraculous was so dear and so useful.

No man, judging from his writings, was less self-conscious, and it is partly owing to this that his tales of others are so vivid. There is scarcely a single personal allusion in his writings, nor does he fill up his stories with remarks of his own. It seems a pity that we know so little of him; but then, had he been personal, he had not been so delightful a story-teller,[1] nor would he have done so well his special work of collecting into one body the knowledge of his time.

That no imaginative work full of his personality exists, sets him apart from the men who feel the poetic impulse, and his long home-staying agrees with this judgment. No inner driving sent him on pilgrimage; his was a scallop-shell of quiet. But though he sat at home, he knew the world. The news of travel and knowledge in England and Europe were brought to the cell of Baeda, and all the corn he received he made into bread which men could eat and digest with ease. We can well imagine with what charm he welcomed his guests and how many were the friends he made. One man, however, as age grew on him, seems to have been nearest to him. This was Ecgberht of York, whom Baeda must have chosen to carry on his work of learning, of teaching and writing. Almost the only visit he paid in his long life was to Ecgberht, when for a few days they sat together and talked over education, literature, and the state of the Church in Northumbria. The year after he sent to Ecgberht the last of his extant writings, the well-known *Epistola ad Egbertum*. "The soundness and far-sightedness of the ecclesiastical views in this work would be remarkable in any age, and are especially remarkable in a monk. The lessons contained in the letter might serve, in the neglect or observance of them, as a key for the whole history of the Anglo-Saxon Church."[2] Independent of this usefulness is the literary quality of the letter. It is in excellent form; it slides, with easy and natural connection, from subject to subject; it is as clear as a bell; its firmness and authority are as distinguished as its gentleness and courtesy. What he says

[1] One personal touch belongs to the artistic side of the man, and it is of the more interest when we think of the boy who sang in the choirs at Wearmouth and Jarrow, of the man who admired the poetry of Caedmon, who sang psalms and antiphons with mingled joy and sorrow on his death-bed, who made and chanted English hymns. He is speaking of music, and he cannot keep back his pleasure in it:

"Among all the sciences, this is more commendable, courtly, pleasing, mirthful, and lovely. It makes a man liberal, courteous, glad, amiable; it exhorts him to bear fatigue; it comforts him under labour; it refreshes the troubled mind; it takes away headaches and sorrow; and dispels the depraved humours and the desponding spirit." — Bed. *Op.* vol. viii. p. 417. (S. Turner's translation.)

[2] These are the words of Bishop Stubbs. Bede, *Dict. Eccles. Biog.*

of the fitting language to be used by a bishop may well be said of the style of his letter — "His speech should always be seasoned with the salt of wisdom, elevated above the common diction, and more worthy of the Divine ear." Few pastoral letters, and it may well bear that name, have been more weighty with wisdom, piety, and grace; and the words are worthy of the emotions and thoughts with which they are charged. Its love of the souls of men, its love of the work of Christ, are both suffused with a solemn and admonitory love of his country. Sadness and hope, when the old man looks forth from his quiet place over the past and future of Northumbria, commingle in his language, and the sense of his approaching departure gives the letter all the dignity of the last words of a servant of the Lord. For now his time was at hand, and his scholars clustered more closely round him. While he could still move, he never missed his daily service in the church. "I know," he said, with his childlike grace, and it is Alcuin who records the phrase, "that the angels visit the canonical hours and the gatherings of the brethren; what if they do not find me among the brethren? Will they not say, Where is Baeda; why does he not come with the brethren to the prescribed prayers?" At last, as the days grew on to the time of the Lord's Ascension, his sickness grew upon him; and Cuthbert, his scholar, has recorded in a letter, some of which I have already quoted, and which, from its observant and affectionate grace, is a part of English literature, the happy hours of the dying of his father and master whom God loved. He sang the antiphons, but when he came to the word, *Do not forsake us*, he burst into tears and they all mourned with him. But he had also much joy, and he filled even these days with work. "I have not lived so as to be ashamed," he said, "among you; nor do I fear to die, because we have a gracious God," — words which St. Ambrose also used. He laboured to compose two works. The first of these was Collections out of the notes of Bishop Isidorus, and of this he said — his love of truthful work still strong in death — "I will not have my pupils read a falsehood, nor work therein without profit after my death." The second was a translation of the Gospel of St. John as far as the words, "But what are these among so many?" — and the history of English literature speaks of it with pleasure and regret; with pleasure, for it is the first translation into our own tongue of any book of the Bible; with regret, for the translation has not come down to us.

On the Tuesday before the Ascension he suffered still more, but dictated cheerfully, saying among other things, "Go on

swiftly; I know not how long I can continue. My Maker may soon take me away." The night was passed in thanksgiving, and on Wednesday he bid them write with speed what he had begun. "Most dear Master," said one, "there is still one chapter wanting, does it trouble you to be asked more questions?" — "It is no trouble," he answered. "Take your pen, make ready and write fast." Which he did, but at the ninth hour he said to me, "I have some little things of value in my chest, such as pepper, napkins, and incense; run quickly and bring the priests of our monastery that I may distribute among them the gifts which God has given me." Then he passed the day "joyfully till the evening, and the boy who wrote for him said, 'Dear Master, there is yet one sentence unwritten.' He answered, 'Write quickly.' Soon after the boy said, 'The sentence is now written.' And he replied, 'It is well; you have said the truth. It is ended. Take my head into your hands, for I am well satisfied to sit facing my holy place, where I was wont to pray.' And thus on the pavement of his little cell, singing, 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,' — when he had named the Holy Ghost, he breathed his last, and so departed to the kingdom of Heaven." So passed away, as quietly as he had lived, the "Light of the Church," the "Father of English learning."[1]

While he was yet alive, a new school of poetry, other than the Caedmonic school which he had celebrated, had begun; and soon grew steadily. It lasted fully fifty years after his death; until that fatal time when Jarrow and Wearmouth where he had worked, and Lindisfarne which he had loved, were harried by the heathen men. It is this new school and its labours which now call us back from the prose writers to the poets, from the literature in England of a foreign tongue to a literature in our own language.

[1] They wrote an epitaph for him —

> Presbyter hic Baeda requiescit carne sepultus;
> Dona, Christe, animam in caelis gaudere per aevum;
> Daque illi sophiae debriari fonte, cui jam
> Suspiravit ovans, intento semper amore.

I have placed these bad verses here that I may quote the indignant criticism which William of Malmesbury, with all the humorous haughtiness of a scholar, makes upon them. Moreover, his criticism shows how rapidly scholarship, beyond York, decayed in Northumbria. "They are contemptible," he says, and adds, when he has quoted them, "Is it possible to thin down by any excuse the disgrace, that there was not to be found, even in that monastery where, during his lifetime the school of all learning had flourished, a single person who could write his epitaph, save in this mean and paltry style? But enough of this; I will return to my subject." — *Chron.*, Bk. i. 3.

CHAPTER XXII

"THE DISCOURSE OF THE SOUL TO THE BODY" AND "THE ELEGIAC POEMS"

THE characteristic of the Caedmon cycle of poems is the absence of self-consciousness; the personality of the poet does not appear in *Genesis*, *Exodus*, or *Daniel*, in the *Christ and Satan*, or in *Judith*. It is true that in *Genesis B* a good deal of subtle drawing of character exists — as subtle, that is, as the age permitted, — but this part of the poem is said to be much later than the death of Baeda. Yet, even here, the writer is not concerned with himself, his own sorrows, or his salvation.

It is quite different with a class of poems which began to rise about, I think, the beginning of the eighth century. These poems are concerned with personal fates, and with the emotions these fates awaken; with the personal relation of the soul to God and its eternal state; and many of them are written with the eye of the writer fixed on his own heart and its imaginations. Baeda's death-lay is a short piece which represents a whole class of poetical prayers wrung forth by the passion of the soul for redemption; and this class of poem now continued to be composed by the English. Every one of them worth calling poetry is steeped in personal feeling. This subjective drift of poetry is especially marked in Cynewulf. All the poems which he has signed with his name, however far the story he tells in them be impersonal, contain, either in their midst or at the end, a short or long passage which is entirely taken up with his own feelings. Even the *Riddles* may begin and close with a personal representation; and the things concerning which he riddles are personified with a force which proves how deeply he was penetrated with this individual manner of thinking and feeling.

The poems discussed in this chapter are, I think, earlier than Cynewulf's work, somewhat earlier even than the *Riddles*. Four of them belong to the earthly fates of men, and one to their spiritual fate. This one poem is called the *Discourse of*

the Soul to its Body. The other four are the Elegies, and I think I may claim that term for them; at least in its earlier sense among the Greeks. Three of them are *laments,* and one is a longing cry of love.

The *Discourse of the Soul to its Body* exists in full as a double poem. The first is the speech of a lost soul to its corpse; the second of a saved soul to its body. The first is found in the Exeter and also in the Vercelli book; the second — a fragment without an end — is only in the Vercelli book, and the first is as good as the second is poor work. So distinct is their power, though their motives are similar, that I am inclined to guess that the second was written some time after the first, in order to complete the representation of the subject, and by another poet; and if this be the case, it might explain why the second poem does not appear in the Exeter book. Moreover, the second poem stands alone. The first was frequently imitated, the second never. "No poem of a similar kind," says Hammerich, "in which a pious soul speaks with its body is found in any other literature." We may conjecture then, since the one was imitated and the other not, that the first poem originally stood alone, and the second was afterwards added, perhaps by Cynewulf himself. It is not worth while perhaps to make this suggestion, but unless it is made, I cannot express my opinion that the first verses may be as early as the beginning of the eighth century. I give this date with diffidence, because I am conscious of expressions and of a certain manner in various parts of the poem which seem to belong to a later time, and so much so, that even if the suggestion be not true, I must still hold that the poem was edited with additions at a later period. Nevertheless, the lines I subjoin seem to mark the year in which it was written.

> Then shall come the spirit, crying out with sorrows!
> After seven nights shall the soul draw near to find
> Always its own body (once long time it bore it —)
> For three hundred winters; if the King of nations,
> If Almighty God earlier will not work
> Of this world the end. l. 9.

The spirit, when seven nights have passed, will, every night for 300 years, visit the corpse it once inhabited. Why 300 years? The answer is, I conjecture, that it was the general expectation at this time that the end of the world would come in the year 1000. If the poet was thinking of this, the date of the poem would be about the year 700; and that he *was* thinking of this appears more probable from his phrase, "un-

less it be the will of Almighty God to bring the world to an end sooner than in 300 years." Some literary questions concerning Anglo-Saxon poetry would be made clearer if this meaning of the verses should prove to be justifiable.

"Cold is the voice of the Spirit and grimly it calls to the corpse, 'O gory dust! why didst thou vex me? O foulness, all rotted by the earth; O likeness of the clay! God sent me into thee, I could not leave thee; thy sinful lusts pressed me down, it seemed to me 30,000 winters till thy death-day! Thou wert rich in food, sated with wine; I was thirsty for God's body, for the drink of the Spirit. Shame shalt thou bear in the great Day. Thou art dearer now to none than the swart raven. Thou hast no goods, only thy naked bones; thy joys are nothing, but by night I must seek thee again and again, and at cock-crowing go away. Better, on the day thou shalt give account, hadst thou been born a bird, a fish, the fiercest of serpents than a man. Wroth will the Lord be at that Doom-tide. And what shall we two do?'"

This is the abstract of the speech, and it has its own special quality. Then the poet describes the spirit's departure, and the silence of the body. It cannot speak; it is altogether riven asunder and plundered by the worms. One of them leads the way into the body for the rest, and this is the sole piece of creative imagination in the poem —

119. *Gifer* is he hight, (grim that Worm is,)
Sharper than the needle are the jaws of him.
First of all — he drives into the Earth-grave,
Tears the tongue asunder: through the teeth he pierces;
From above, into the head, eats he through the eyes;
Works for other worms way unto their food,
To their wealthy banquet!

This King, this Captain of the Worms, *Gifer*, venomous Greed, piercing his way for the rest through the head into the corpse, is worthy of Ezekiel.

There are four Elegies full of interest in Anglo-Saxon poetry; these are the *Wanderer*, the *Seafarer*, the *Wife's Complaint*, and the *Husband's Message*. To these we may add the *Ruin*, though it is not sufficiently personal in its passion to come easily within the proper circle of the Elegy. I have already translated the *Ruin*. Its motive — the sorrow for departed splendour and happiness awakened by the sight of a town long since desolate, with its fortress and market-hall crumbling in the midst of it; the recalling of the joyous life that once was there, and the imaging, through its death, of the passing away

of all the world — is a common motive. The *Rhyming Poem* seems to take it up. It is reproduced in some of Cynewulf's longer poems. It appears in the midst of one of these four Elegies, in the *Wanderer;* and the passage is so like certain lines in the *Ruin* that it almost seems to be suggested, if not copied, from the *Ruin*, or the passage in the *Ruin* from it.

This was a motive which lay continually before the eyes of men in Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria during the long series of petty wars of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. The subject alone cannot then date these elegiac poems. But when we consider the elements in them which distinguish them from other Anglo-Saxon poems of the eighth century, and at the same time keep our eye fixed on the history of that century in Northumbria, I think we may make a probable conjecture as to their date.

The internal evidence of the *Wanderer*, the *Wife's Complaint*, and the *Husband's Message* points to their having been written in a time of disturbance, when not only the halls of nobles were desolated, but when exile was common. The wife talks of her husband driven from his folk and refuging in a far-off land. The message of the husband comes from a foreign country to England. She is to join him in his exile where he has made a home. The wanderer has fled from England, and sees the vision of his ruined happiness and of his slaughtered friends. This state of things would suit with the condition of England after the coming of the Northmen. But there is no allusion to the Danes in the poems, and there was no literature in Northumbria in the ninth century. It would also suit with the time of anarchy in Northumbria after the resignation of Eadberht in 758, to which period we may refer the passages in Cynewulf's poems which sorrowfully remember happier days. But I do not feel as if these elegies belonged to the latter part of the eighth century, and my reason is first, that they have a certain pagan element which has wholly disappeared from the poems which belong to the Cynewulf cycle; and secondly, that the sorrow expressed is not a retrospective sorrow, like Cynewulf's, for the decay of the whole land, but a personal and present pain. We might fairly find such a time in that parenthesis of bad government and of national tumult which filled the years between the death of Aldfrith in 705 and the renewed peace of Northumbria under Ceolwulf in the years that followed 729.

The pagan quality, or rather the absence of any Christian element in these poems, is remarkable. There is not a trace

of Christianity, save perhaps a certain overfineness of sentiment, in the *Wife's Complaint* or the *Husband's Message*. In the *Seafarer* the first part of the poem is without a single Christian touch. The second part is a Christian allegory of the first. Many think, however, that the poem is one, that the writer had the second part in his mind when he wrote the first. The matter cannot be determined; but my impression is that they are distinct, and that either some later writer added the allegory to the first part, or that the poet himself, later in his life, distressed to find his early work so much without religion, continued it into a Christian allegory. As to the *Wanderer*, it opens with a Christian prologue and closes with a Christian epilogue, but the whole body of the poem was written, it seems to me, by a person who thought more of the goddess Wyrd than of God, whose life and way of thinking were uninfluenced by any distinctive Christian doctrine.

Now I conjecture that in the first twenty or thirty years of the eighth century there were poets living in the courts of the princes and earls of Northumbria — such, for example, as we know Cynewulf was in his youth — who were Bohemian enough, if I may be permitted that term, not to care for anything but poetry; to whom Christianity was a good thing, but over whom it had no special hold; who were half pagan at heart while Christian in name; and who resembled, but only in the general temper of their minds, the class of literary men whom the Renaissance made in Florence and Rome. It was this class who wrote, I think, these elegies, and it is probable that there were a great many more poems of this kind. Later on, they were taken up by bards who were connected with the monasteries, and we may almost lay our hands on the work of these men in the prologue and epilogue of the *Wanderer*. But even this Christianising of older work was not done by men who lived late in the eighth century. At that time, when Cynewulf, for example, wrote the *Christ*, these additions would have been, at least in my opinion, more specialised in their doctrine. To this early time belong also, as I think, a number of the riddles attributed to Cynewulf. The riddles on the Bow and Sword and Spear, on the Hurricane, the Swan and others, are quite apart from Christian sentiment. They are the work of a man who, a Christian no doubt in name, cared only for his art.

Another thing worthy of remark about the elegies is their intensity with regard to the aspects of Nature. I hesitate to call it a love of nature, because I do not think it was a conscious pleasure, such as we possess. But, as I have said else-

where, the descriptions of nature show so close an observation both of what is beautiful and what sublime, that there must have been pleasure to account for the observation, and where there is pleasure there is love. The *Seafarer* could scarcely describe better the savage doings of the German Ocean or the soft incoming of the spring; the *Wanderer* paints the tumbling waves and the sea-birds dipping and preening their feathers, and the wintry storms darkening the sky and binding the earth; the *Wife's Complaint* dwells like a Highland ballad on the wild-wood dwelling under the roots of the great oak among the briars; the *Husband's Message* sings of the advent of the summer, and the cuckoo crying from the woods that fledge the mountain-steep. There is nothing like this in Icelandic poetry — nothing of the same contemplative quality. And what is still more remarkable and modern, is that the natural objects are not always seen as they are, but as they seem to the mood of the poet. They are touched with his joy or gloomed with his misfortune. The pleasant cry of the cuckoo is a voice of sorrow to the longing lover. The careering waves and the sea-birds' play are mournful to the exile who sits alone and grieving on the cliffs. Even the modern passion of being alone with Nature is not unrepresented. The young man in the *Seafarer* longs to be away from the joys and noise of men upon the far paths of the solitary sea. There is nothing so modern in sentiment, nay in very expression, in the whole of English literature till we come to Tennyson, as the first part of the *Seafarer*. The cry of Tennyson's *Ulysses* is in it, and the cry of his *Sailor Boy*. Were I to put it into blank verse, every one would say that I was imitating Tennyson. Even in lines of mere description, without the elegiac sentiment of humanity, this Tennysonian likeness appears. When the Seafarer says that he was in the Northern Sea

> Icicle-hung, while flew the hail in showers,

one would swear that the line was from the mint of Tennyson. Nor is the psychological passage in the *Seafarer* less modern in feeling. I remember nothing in the Icelandic poems which is similar to it; and I do not know where, in the history of English poetry, to find the poetic temper likely to produce it except in the later Elizabethans of the reign of James I., and in the last thirty years. The young seaman, eager for the ocean, sees his soul pass from his body, make the voyage he desires to make, and return to him, greedy with new passion for the deep. The *Wanderer* embodies his memories in the

ghosts of his friends who float before him in the mist; he cries to them, mindful of old comradeship, but they are silent. They bring him none of the old familiar songs. They swim away in the mist, as in a sea, and his pain is deepened. This is not so modern as the passage in the *Seafarer*, but it is quite at home in the nineteenth century. When we think that these poems were written fully 1100 years ago, this is very remarkable; and the recurrence, after all those centuries, of a special distinct note of sentiment, only shows how constant are the roots of English song, and how needful it is, if we would fully understand it, to go back to the ground in which it was planted. Seeing then that these elegies are important, and that, as short pieces of poetic art, they are the best things of this kind which we possess from ancient times, I discuss and translate them at large.

The *Husband's Message*, or, as I think it should be more justly called, the *Lover's Message*, consists of an introduction of eleven lines describing, in the manner of an Anglo-Saxon riddle, the slice of wood on which the message is carved in runes. The rest is the message itself; and the wood-tablet is the spokesman throughout — an awkward and fantastic experiment of the poet. It tells first of its origin among the Tree-kin, and then of how often, in the bosom of the ship, it was sent over the salt sea streams to those in high-built houses. This time it brings a message of love to the beloved, hoping to find her constant, imploring her to join its sender in his foreign home. Bethink thee, it says, of the troth thou didst pledge of old in the burgs where mead was drunk; a hatred drove thy lover forth from the folk of victory; now he calls thee to take rede how thou mayst sail the sea to him.

19. Soon as ever thou shalt listen on the edges of the cliff
To the cuckoo in the copse-wood, chanting of his sorrow,
. . . . . .
25. Then begin to seek the sea where the sea-mew is at home;
Sit thee in the sea-bark, so that to the south-ward
Thou mayst light upon thy lover, o'er the ocean path-ways,
Where thy Lord with longing looks and waits for thee.

Here, after this charming call, the manuscript is disturbed, but the meaning is that there can be in the whole world no joy so great as would be if they were together. Treasure of gold the Lover has won and a fair land, and many warriors serve him. He has overcome all trouble; but nothing is worth anything unless he have her with him. No desire has he

43. Nor for jewels, nor for horses, nor for joys beside the mead,
Nor for any of Earls' treasures, here the earth upon —
If, King's Daughter, he should lack thee,
After all the troth of yore pledged between the twain of you.

And the poem ends with the binding together of the runes of their names *S. R. EA. W.* and *M.*,[1] to symbolise the bond of love he will keep faithfully till death. The motive is clear and simple, and the strain of feeling passionate and innocent. It has neither the strength nor the intensity of Icelandic work on a similar subject, but it has its own distinct note of tender sentiment.

The *Wife's Complaint* is a much more involved piece — its subject obscure, its motives varied, and its thought finely woven. Its fault as a poem is over-subtlety, but it is better written than the last, and more interesting. We might almost say, if we could think that both these poems were written by the same person, that he perhaps unconsciously contrasted the simplicity of a man's affection with the tangled variety of a woman's love, his one thought with her multitudinousness. It was Ettmüller who first said it was the plaint of a woman, and some have asked whether it stood alone, or was part of a larger poem, in which also the *Husband's Message* was contained. Both, it has been thought, might belong to the poems of the Genovefa-Saga, in which Genovefa, "abandoned by her husband, pours forth her sorrow in the solitude of the Ardennes' wood." But Ten Brink thinks it is a single poem which tells its own subject, and Wülker, agreeing with him, says that if it belong to any Saga, it would be to the Offa Saga, which at least was known in England.

The foes of the woman, the relatives of the husband, have made bad blood between him and her, accusing her either of falseness or magic. Exile was the punishment for both these crimes, and the husband banishes her to a wood, to an allotted place within boundaries which she must not overstep. Many women, it is probable, were living in this fashion in England during the eighth century, and this one begins —

1. Of myself with sadness laden do I sing this song,
Tell the tale of mine own fate! Truly can I say
What of sorrows I have suffered since I was upwaxen,
Whether new or old, but never worse than now.
6. First, my Lord, he fared from his folk away,
O'er the surging of the sea! Morning-sorrow then was mine!

[1] The runes that stand for *D* and *M* are so like one another that it is doubtful which letter is here. Wülker prefers *M*.

Where, O where within the land was my Master now?
Then to fare me I was faring, following of him to seek,
Friendless and a flying exile!

Then her husband's kinsmen began with crafty thought to plan how they might set them apart, so that they should "live the loathliest of lives, but she endured the longing of desire." And her lord bade her take a dwelling in the wood. There were few who loved her, few were her friends, and all the worse was her cruel fate. He whom she loved most, who loved her most, had most mistaken her, and had hidden his heart from her. "My heart for this is grieved the most"—and Desdemona herself might have used the words—

18. That I found a man wholly fitted for me;
Yet of soul unhappy, sorrow-struck in spirit,
From me hiding all his heart; holding murder in his thoughts,
Yet so blithe of bearing. O full oft with vows we bound us
That save Death alone nothing should divide us,
Nothing in the world — but now — all changed is that!
Now is it, alas, as if had never been
Friendship erst between us. Far away or near,
I must bear the hatred of my best-beloved.
27. In a grove amid this wood they have garred me dwell,
Underneath a holm-oak tree, in this hollow of the earth!
Old is this earth-house; I am all one long desire!
Dim these caverned dells, steep the downs above,
Bitter my burgh-hedges, with wild-briars overgrown.
Dreary is my dwelling! Here my Lord's departure
Oft has wrought me wretchedly.
Lovers in the world there are,
Who in loving live together, lie together on their bed,
While I, in the early dawning, all alone am going
Underneath this oak-tree, in and out of these earth-hollows,
Where I needs must sit alone all the summer-lengthened day,
Where I, weeping, shall bewail for my woful banishment
My uncounted sorrows.

And this part of the elegy ends with an accent of despair, "Never, never shall I rest from misery and longing." Then, if Grein's conjecture be right, and it is quite plausible, she turns to curse the author of her exile in the following lines. But it may as well, and even better, be said by her of her husband. In that case the lines below are not imprecation but a mournful statement of what he is sure to suffer. Care will be his and woe and outlawry—

42. Sorrowful of soul shall the young man ever be;
Hard to bear his heart-thought, howsoe'er he have
Outwardly blithe bearing — and therewith breast-care,

Ever-during sorrow's driving? Doomed to him let be,
All world-woefulness; and full wide be he outlawed
In a far-land of the folk.

Then with a rapid change she thinks of her husband as exiled from her. She is not angry with him — and the whole of this passage is subtly thought — but full of tender womanliness, full of pity that he is deprived of her. She knows he loves her still, pictures his lonely life thinking of his home that once was so happy. She creates around him scenery in harmony with her heart and his. Confident of her own fidelity she lets herself love him; but he who thinks her guilty, and yet loves her, O what sorrow must be his? Worse, worse than mine! Wretched am I,

47. For my friend is sitting
Under the o'erhanging cliff, over-frosted by the storm;
O my Wooer, so outwearied, by the water overflowen,
In that dreary dwelling! There endures my dear one
Anguish mickle of the mind, far too oft remembers him
Of a happier home! O, to him is woe
Who shall with a weary longing wait for the Beloved!

From this remarkable poem, so modern in feeling, we pass to a poem still more modern, more distinctly English, mingling in it our sea-longing and our sense of the dangers of the sea. This is the *Seafarer*. It has, like the *Wanderer*, some obscure passages to which many meanings have been allotted. These render translation difficult, but the chief difficulty arises from the modern feeling of the poem. It is almost impossible not to slip into blank verse, and blank verse of the nineteenth century. To do that were to make it far more modern than it ought to be made. The early English note would be lost. Nevertheless, just to show how near the *Seafarer* and the *Wanderer* are to us, and how easily they wear our dress, I have put them both literally into blank verse in a note at the end of this volume.

I have already said that the latter part of the poem, from verse 64, or as Rieger thinks from verse 72, is a later religious addition. That part I pass by. It resembles any of the homilies, and it has neither intelligence, passion, nor imagination. The first part has these elements, and has them remarkably. We may take it as a dramatic soliloquy, in which the poet contrasts two views of a seaman's life, and ends by saying that whether the life be hard or not, the attraction to it is irresistible; or with some German critics, with Rieger and Kluge, arrange it as a dialogue between an old seaman and a young man on whom the

passion for the sea has come, in which the old man tells, in warning, of the dangers and woes of the deep, and the young man replies. It is a convenient form into which to put the poem, and I use it here, though we may just as well take it as a dramatic lyric.[1]

Seafarer

The Old Man —
Sooth the song that I of myself can sing,
Telling of my travels; how in troublous days,
Hours of hardship oft I've borne!
With a bitter breast-care I have been abiding:
Many seats of sorrow in my ship have known!
Frightful was the whirl of waves, when it was my part
Narrow watch at night to keep, on my Vessel's prow
When it rushed the rocks along.[2] By the rigid cold
Fast my feet were pinched, fettered by the frost,
By the chains of cold. Care was sighing then
Hot my heart around; hunger rent to shreds within
Courage in me, me sea-wearied! This the man knows not,
He to whom it happens happiest on earth,
How I, carked with care, in the ice-cold sea,
Overwent the winter on my wander-ways,
All forlorn of happiness, all bereft of loving kinsmen,
Hung about with icicles; flew the hail in showers.
Nothing heard I there save the howling of the sea,
And the ice-chilled billow, 'whiles the crying of the swan!
All the glee I got me was the gannet's scream,
And the swoughing of the seal, 'stead of mirth of men;
'Stead of the mead drinking, moaning of the sea-mew.
There the storms smote on the crags, there the swallow of the sea
Answered to them, icy-plumed; and that answer oft the earn —
Wet his wings were — barked aloud.
. . . . None of all my kinsmen
Could this sorrow-laden soul stir to any joy.
Little then does he believe who life's pleasure owns
While he tarried in the towns, and but trifling balefulness, —
Proud and insolent with wine — how out-wearied I
Often must outstay on the ocean-path!

[1] Rieger divides it into six parts, and holds that the whole of the poem is composed by one man. The *Old Man* speaks, he says, the lines 1–33 (*corna caldast*); from 39–47 (*fundaŏ*); from 53–57 (*lecgaŏ*); and from 72 to end. The *Young Man* speaks from lines 33–38 (*gesece*); from 48–52 (*gewitan*); from 58–71 (*oŏþringeŏ*). This division is partly adopted in the text, but I am not sure that Kluge's division is not better. It is certainly simpler. The *Old Man* speaks from 1–33, and the *Young Man* from 33–64 or 66. Kluge also believes that the original poem ends at verse 64 or 66; and that the rest is a later edition borrowed in parts from the homilies; but he seems to detect in it also several heterogeneous elements. Wülker thinks that the poem may be a dialogue as far as verse 64, and that this first part had originally nothing to do with Christianity.

[2] *Be clifum cnossade*, "when it dashed against the seas as it ran by the cliffs." This is, I think, the true meaning. It cannot mean "when it struck on the cliffs."

Sombre grew the shade of night, and it snowed from nor'rard,
Frost the field enchained, fell the hail on earth,
Coldest of all corns.

Young Man —

Wherefore now then crash together
Thoughts my soul within that I should myself adventure
The high streamings of the sea, and the sport of the salt waves!
For a passion of the mind every moment pricks me on
All my life to set a-faring; so that far from hence,
I may seek the shore of the strange outlanders.

The *Old Man* now, if we adopt Rieger's division, which is certainly the most dramatic, is carried away by the passion of the young fellow, and remembers his own sea-longing and sea-loving. "Yes," he answers, "there is nothing like it" —

Old Man —
Yes, so haughty of his heart is no hero on the earth,
Nor so good in all his giving, nor so generous in youth,
Nor so daring in his deeds, nor so dear unto his lord,
That he has not always yearning unto his sea-faring,
To whatever work his Lord may have will to make for him.
For the harp he has no heart, nor for having of the rings,
Nor in woman is his weal, in the world he's no delight,
Nor in anything whatever save the tossing o'er the waves!
O for ever he has longing who is urged towards the sea.[1]

Young Man —
Trees rebloom with blossoms, burghs are fair again,
Winsome are the wide plains, and the world is gay —
All doth only challenge the impassioned heart
Of his courage to the voyage, whosoever thus bethinks him,
O'er the ocean billows, far away to go.

And now the ancient mariner takes up again the voice of warning, and with a touch of sorrowful irony brings in to help his prudence the bird of Spring of which the youth has spoken —

Old Man —
Every cuckoo calls a warning, with his chant of sorrow!
Sings the summer's watchman, sorrow is he boding,
Bitter in the bosom's hoard. This the brave man wots not of,
Not the warrior rich in welfare — what the wanderer endures,
Who his paths of banishment, widest places on the sea.

[1] This passage, and the previous one beginning, "That he has not always yearning," etc., may be otherwise explained. "Yearning to seafaring" may be simply yearning in seafaring for the land, and "longing for the sea" may be no more than "longing on the sea for shore." This would, no doubt, suit the old man's argument, but I believe that the meaning in the text is the right one.

Then the youth breaks forth, his passion spurred by opposition, and paints, with a force and freedom of imagination which at this early time is astonishing, how his spirit has left his body — hovers for a moment over his heart, has flown away now over the sea, has made the voyage to the outlanders, and now returns, a lonely-flier, yelling like a cormorant, to join again his body and drive him forth to sea. The passion for the deep has seldom been better imaged. What is this to me, he cries, for that is the sense of the *Forpon* with which he begins —

For behold, my thought hovers now above my heart;
O'er the surging flood of sea now my spirit flies,
O'er the homeland of the whale — hovers then afar
O'er the foldings of the earth! Now again it flies to me
Full of yearning, greedy! Yells that lonely flier;
Whets upon the Whale-way irresistibly my heart,
O'er the storming of the seas!

The rest is a sad business; religion, as too often is the case, has slaughtered poetry. There is no such break of power in the *Wanderer* which is the last of these elegies in the Exeter Book. Some have thought that at verse 80 new matter has been linked on, but this is criticism searching for something to say. The poem moves easily from its beginning to its end, and of all Anglo-Saxon poems it is best in form. It has been allotted to Cynewulf, but there is no proof whatever that he wrote it; nay, the total absence of any Christian feeling in it would almost suggest that in its original form it may have been a purely pagan utterance, but this is a very problematical opinion. Yet some phrases in the prologue lead us to think that the poem was old, was found by some monk, admired and edited by him with a Christian introduction and end —

The Wanderer

PROLOGUE

Oft a lonely wanderer wins at last to pity,
Wins the grace of God, though, begloomed with care,
He must o'er the water-ways, for a weary time,
Push the ice-cold ocean, oaring with his hands,
Wade through ways of banishment! Wyrd is fully wrought.
Thus there quoth an Earth-stepper — of his troubles taking thought,
Of the fall of friendly kinsmen, of the fearful slaughters.

Oft I must alone, at each breaking of the day,
Here complain my care! Of the Quick there is not one
Unto whom I dare me now declare with openness

All my secret soul. Of a sooth, I know
That for any Earl excellent the habit is
That he closely bind all the casket of his life,
Hold his hoard-coffer secure — but think in heart his will!
Never will the weary spirit stand the Wyrd against,
Nor the heart of heaviness for its help provide;
Therefore this unhappy heart oft do Honour-seekers
Closely bind and cover in the coffer of their breast.
So it happed that I — oft-unhappy me!
Far from friendly kinsman, forced away from home —
Had to seal securely all my secret soul,
After that my gold-friend, in the gone-by years,
Darkness of the earth bedecked! Dreary-hearted, from that time,
Went I, winter-wretched, o'er the woven waves of sea,
Searching, sorrow-smitten, for some Treasure-spender's hall,
Where, or far or near, I might find a man,
Who, amidst the mead-halls, might acquainted be with love,
Or to me the friendless fain would comfort give,
Pleasure me with pleasures.
He who proves it, knows
What a cruel comrade careful sorrow is to him,
Who in life but little store of loved forestanders has!
His the track of exile is, not the twisted gold,
His the frozen bosom, not the earth's fertility!
He the Hall remembers then, heroes, and the treasure-taking,
How of yore his gold-friend, when he but a youngling was,
Customed him to festal days! Fallen is all that joy!
O too well he wots of this, who must long forego
All the lore-redes of his Lord, of his loved, his trusted friend,
Then when sleep and sorrow, set together at one time,
Often lay their bondage on the lonely wretched man.
And it seemeth him, in spirit, that he seeth his man-lord,
Clippeth him and kisseth him, on his knee he layeth
Hands and head alike, as when he from hour to hour,
Erewhile, in the older days, did enjoy the Gift-stool.
Then the friendless man forthwith doth awaken,
And he sees before him only fallow waves,
And sea-birds a-bathing, broadening out their plumes;
Falling sleet and snow sifted through with hail —
Then the wounds of heart all the heavier are,
Sorely aching for One's-own! Ever new is pain.

For the memory of kinsmen o'er his mind is floating,
With glee-staves he greeted them, gladly gazes on them —
These companionships of comrades swim away again!
Of the old familiar songs few the spirit brings
Of these floaters in the air.[1] Fresh again is care
For the exile who must urge, often, oh how often,
O'er the welding of the waters his outwearied heart!

[1] I take *fleotendra* to mean the hovering spirits of his comrades whom he sees in the air.

[1] Wherefore I must wonder in this world of ours
Why my soul should not shroud itself in blackness,
When about the life of earls I am wholly wrapt in thought,
How they in one instant gave their household up,
Mighty mooded thanes! So this middle-earth,
Day succeeding day, droops and falls away!

[2] Wherefore no one may be wise till he weareth through
Share of winters in the world-realm. Patient must the wise man be,
Neither too hot-hearted, nor too hasty-worded,
Nor too weak of mind a warrior, nor too wanting in good heed,
Nor o'erfearful, nor too glad, nor too greedy of possessions,
Never overfond of boasting till he throughly know himself.
Every son of man must wait ere he make a haughty vow[3]
Till, however courage-hearted, he may know with certainty
Whither wills to turn its way the thought within his heart.

A grave man should grasp this thought — how ghostlike it is
When the welfare of this world all a-wasted is —
Just as now, most manifold, o'er this middle-garth,
Walls of burgs are standing by the breezes over-blown,
Covered thick with chill frost, and the courts decayed.
Wears to dust the wine-hall, and its Wielder lies
Dispossessed of pleasure. All the peers are fallen,
Stately by the ramparts! War hath ravished some away,
Led them on the forth-way; one the flying ship has borne
O'er high-heaving ocean — one the hoary wolf
Dragged to shreds when dead! Drear his cheek with tears,
One an earl has hidden deep in earthen hollow.[4]

So the Maker of mankind hath this mid-earth desert made,
Till the ancient Ogres' work idle stood and void
Of its town-indwellers, stripped of all its joy.

[1] Now the motive changes; it is no longer his personal grief that disturbs him the most. It is the sorrow of the whole world; how and with what temper it must be met; and yet of what little use is any guard against the misery. Wyrd has its own way; and the Winter Weather is its image.

[2] He turns to sketch the temper of mind which is best fitted to combat with this incessant Fate, and there is no better portrait of the steady mean of the best English nature. Settled, secure in courage between excess and defect, not moving till his plan is made, but ready then to face all consequence. This is not quite the *Happy Warrior* of Wordsworth, but it may well be compared with that image of a hero.

[3] This refers to the custom of standing at the great feast of the year and taking vow to perform some valiant deed before the year shall close. Many troubles came on men who, drunk or excited, swore that of which next day they repented; and it is on such overweening vows that the story of some Sagas is built.

[4] These are the various kinds of death, — death on the war-path; death on a sea-expedition, that is, death in a foreign land (*Fugel* is the war-ship); death, when outlawed, by the wolf; death in old age; and the earl weeps when he buries his friend in the barrow because he has not died in battle, — one of the pagan touches in the poem.

Whoso then this Wall-stead[1] wisely has thought over,
And this darkened Life deeply has considered,
Sage of soul within, oft remembers far away
Slaughters cruel and uncounted, and cries out this Word,
"Whither went the horse, whither went the man? Whither went the Treasure-giver?
What befell the seats of feasting? Whither fled the joys in hall?
Ea, la! the beaker bright! Ea, la! the byrnied warriors!
Ea, la! the people's pride! O how perished is that Time!
Veiled beneath Night's helm it is, as if it ne'er had been!"

Left behind them, to this hour, by that host of heroes loved,
Stands the Wall, so wondrous high, with worm-images adorned!
Strength of ashen spears snatched away the earls,
Swords that for the slaughter hungered, and the Wyrd sublime!
See the storms are lashing on the stony ramparts;
Sweeping down, the snow-drift shuts up fast the earth —
Terror of the winter when it cometh wan!
Darkens then the dusk of Night, driving from the nor'rard
Heavy drift of hail for the harm of heroes.

All is full of trouble, all this realm of earth!
Doom of weirds is changing all the world below the skies;
Here our fee[2] is fleeting, here the friend is fleeting,
Fleeting here is man, fleeting is the kinsman!
All this earth's foundation is an idle thing become.[3]

EPILOGUE

So quoth the sage in his soul as he sat him apart at the runing.[4]
Brave is the hero who holdeth his troth: nor shall he too hastily ever
Give voice to the woe in his breast, before he can work out its cure,
A chieftain, with courage to act! O well 'tis for him who comfort doth seek
And grace from the Father in Heaven, where the Fastness stands sure for us all.

This is the last and finest of these elegies, pagan in feeling, and, it may be, built on some pagan original; but it is not more pagan than many of the *Riddles* of Cynewulf, half of which seem to me also to belong to this early part of the eighth century, and to have been written when the young poet

[1] A place where walls had been, a ruined burg. [2] Goods, property.
[3] This is the end, and the last line clinches the subject of the poem with a fine climax of passion. Then comes the Epilogue, the addition of the more Christian poet who found and edited the earlier work; he has nothing original to say. He only repeats, a mere editor, the motive of the lines 66 and 70. It is true we may grant him the contrast he makes between the Fastness in Heaven — the city which hath foundations — and the wasted and passing fortresses of earth described by the poet.
[4] That is, in secret counsel with himself; or is it possible that the original was really written in runes?

was living at the court of some lively Ætheling, riding, warring, singing, making love, — one of those semi-heathen Bohemians with a Christian education of whom I have spoken.

The *Riddles* are contained in the Exeter Book, not together, but in three separate divisions. The manuscript appears to contain ninety-five of them, but, as generally reckoned, we have only eighty-nine, though there were probably a hundred. It was the custom of riddle-writers to make a century of them. Symphosius made a hundred, so did Ealdhelm. Tatwine, Archbishop of Canterbury, only composed forty, and Eusebius, of whose life we know nothing, completed the collection of Tatwine up to a hundred. Boniface and others wrote a few, but they are chiefly of a sacred character. These were all written in Latin verse, and vary from four to twenty lines. Ealdhelm, however, who treated his subjects with more fancy, wrote many of a much greater length. What sort of thing a riddle of this time meant is sufficiently plain from the examples already given.

The collection in the Exeter Book is, with the exception of one riddle, in English verse, and at least half of it is worthy of the name of literature. Symphosius, Tatwine, Eusebius, and Ealdhelm are used by the writer, and since he makes use of them all, he could not have written earlier than the eighth century. The Riddles are of various lengths, from four to over a hundred lines. The greater number of them escape from the Latin convention, and are as English in matter and feeling as they are in verse. Even when they closely follow for a line or two the Latin original, the translation takes an English turn, as if the English verse and words compelled a change of thought and sentiment. Nor is this the only difference. The writer has the poetic faculty of which his models are destitute, and his work is as superior to theirs in conception of each subject, in impersonation of it, and in imagination, as Shakspere's *Hamlet* is to its precursor. Those who state that these riddles are merely imitations can either not have read them, or, having read them, are unable to distinguish between what is poetry and what is not poetry. Their excellence is not however uniform. Some are poor and meagre, and these are chiefly those which follow the Latin most closely. Others are of an extraordinary fine quality, as, for example, those on the storms and the weapons of war. It is more than probable then that various writers shared in their composition ; but it is also plain that there was one man of youthful and vigorous imagination, and of an original personality, who, having a poet's love of humanity and of nature, made a great number of them.

Who this man was is still a subject of discussion. Leo, in 1857, declared that the solution of the first Riddle was the name of Cynewulf. As he had written his name in runes in other poems, so here, at the head of the *Riddles*, he expressed it enigmatically, following the sound and not the spelling of his name. Dietrich disagreed with this explanation, but nevertheless maintained the authorship of Cynewulf. The eighty-sixth Riddle, which concerns a wolf and sheep, was related, he said, to Cynewulf; and the eighty-ninth, which he explained as the Wandering Singer was Cynewulf himself. This evidence of authorship, resting on a riddle of great obscurity and on questionable assumptions, is of extreme tenuity, and Trautman and others have bluntly thrown it aside. Professor Morley also is satisfied that the answer to the first Riddle is the "Christian Preacher," that the eighty-sixth means the "overcoming of the Devil by the Lamb of God," and that the eighty-ninth means the "Word of God." These answers, in which we are rather overwhelmed with Christianity, make an end, he suggests, of all the supposed evidence that Cynewulf was the writer of the Riddles. Each critic argues himself into faith in his own rightness, but the fact is that no conclusion is possible at present. I believe myself that Cynewulf was the writer of the greater number of the Riddles, and that they were written at different periods of his life, but the grounds for this belief are vague. It is clear, I think, that their writer was a wandering singer at one time of his life, that he had fought as a warrior, that he had sailed the seas, that he knew well a rocky and storm-lashed coast, that he had seen many phases of religious, social, and domestic life, that he had lived with the rich and the poor, with the ecclesiastic and the war captain. Any poet might have had all these experiences as well as Cynewulf. But we know of Cynewulf, and we know that he did once belong to a noble's court, and that his youth was healthy and gay; that he was a singer of songs, and that the probability is that he wandered as a poet from court to court, from village to village, from monastery to monastery. It is also plain, from passages in *Guthlac* and in the *Elene* and the *Christ*, that Cynewulf knew the seas and knew about war. It is not absurd then, even if we give up the first and last Riddles as evidence for Cynewulf's authorship, to think that the Riddles belong to him. Moreover, there are certain parallel passages between some of them and the authentic works of Cynewulf which, not only in wording, of which I think little, but in sentiment, of which I think much, might lead one to infer that they were written

by Cynewulf. These grounds are, however, only literary, and literary persons alone are likely to receive them as amounting to probability. Nor am I at all anxious to prove the point. What is important is not who wrote the poetry, but of what kind the poetry is. I hope I have made it pretty clear in previous chapters, not by criticism, but by examples, that the writer, whoever he was, had not only talent, but some genius; nor do I hesitate to say that some of the most imaginative Anglo-Saxon poetry we possess is contained in about a dozen of the Riddles. I do not think I need dwell here on their range of natural description, or on any of their special characteristics. Those who have read what I have given of them in the chapters on the "Settlement," and the "Sea," can indulge in and supply their own criticisms. The Riddles given in those chapters are, however, on noble subjects, belonging to Nature and War and Wisdom; things fitted for the hearing of the gray-haired prince, the warrior, and the monk. There are a number of others, of which I have not written, which were made for the villagers and the ruder sort; to fit the other end of society. The common animals of the hamlets — the ox, the dog, the hens, the swine; the common things in use — the cowhide, the leathern bottle, the wine-vat, the onion, the one-eyed garlic seller, and the fools who are led astray by the night — are celebrated by this manifold writer who had seen the world. It only remains to say that there are a few of such primæval grossness that they indicate a young man's hand, and a coarse audience in village or camp. It seemed to me once, that if he was afterwards, as some think, the Bishop of Lindisfarne or even a monk — I do not believe he was either — he would not have allowed them to exist. But it is probable that he could not have repressed them. They were afloat, and were no doubt repeated from mouth to mouth. They may not have been collected until after the writer's death. Moreover, English folk, even the monks, were never very prudish, and became less and less so as monasticism grew corrupt in Northumbria. Even Leofric, who, I suppose, read the Exeter Book through before he gave it to his Cathedral Library, did not erase these riddles.

CHAPTER XXIII

CYNEWULF

We know the names of only two writers of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and these two are Caedmon and Cynewulf. We know that Caedmon was a Northumbrian of Whitby, but we do not know whether he wrote any of the poems which bear his name. It is different when we think of Cynewulf. Many believe him to have been a Northumbrian, but we do not know this with any certainty. But we do know some of the poems he wrote; he has signed four of them with his name — *Juliana*, the *Christ*, the *Fates of the Apostles*, and the *Elene*. There is a fifth writing — the *Riddles* — which most persons think he has also signed with his name. In the four first he signs in this fashion. He puts the runes which spell his name into certain connected and personal verses in the midst, or at the end, of each of these poems; and Kemble was the first to discover that these runes, when placed together, made up the poet's name. Owing to this discovery it occurred, as we have seen, to Leo that the first Riddle contained in a charade the syllables of Cynewulf's name, and that in this way the *Riddles* were also signed.

Attached to the four signatures, if I may call them so, there are four personal statements in which something of his character and part of his life are vividly portrayed. Moreover, the last riddle which I have translated in the first chapter is, if we allot it to him, as vivid a description of himself as a young poet, as the personal descriptions in the signed poems are of himself as a religious man in old and middle age. We possess then not only his name, but we can also realise him as a man; and he is not unlike some of our own poets, though so many centuries have passed away. He is, for instance, as personal as Cowper, and in much the same way. No other of the Anglo-Saxon poets has this fashion of talking about himself, and it is so unique, and the manner of it so distinct, that when I find it in a poem which is not signed by him — in the *Dream of the Rood* — it seems to me to be as good as his signature.

The question as to whether he was a Northumbrian or not has been elaborately argued to and fro, and Wülker, with all these warring arguments before him, concludes that the matter remains doubtful until further evidence, for or against, is supplied.[1] I have, however, a few suggestions to make in confirmation of my belief that he was a Northumbrian, or at least lived in the North; and I am not aware (though it is probable enough) that they have been made before. The first is, that if Cynewulf wrote the *Riddles* — and far the greater number of critics think he did — he was well acquainted with a storm-lashed coast bordered with cliffs; with the life and business of sailors in their ships, and that the seas which he knew were not only tempestuous but frequently weltering with ice. It seems incredible that the writer of the riddles on the Anchor and the Tempests, to say nothing of others, could have lived inland in Mercia, or on the low-lying coasts of East Anglia, or on the southern coasts of Wessex where ice was never seen in the sea,[2] and where seamanship in the eighth century was at a very low ebb. The *Christ* is also full of sea allusions; the cliff-barrier between sea and land is once, at least, vigorously seen; and the famous passage, translated at vol. i. p. 256, is written by one who had been a sailor, who knew the pains

[1] A full discussion of the whole question will be found in Wülker's *Grundriss*, pp. 157–164.

[2] This welter of sea and ice which, frequently spoken of in *Beowulf*, is there no doubt a remembrance of the Baltic frosts, is also spoken of in the *Seafarer* and the *Riddles*, and other poems which belong, as I think, to Northumbria. It would not be seen, I have said, on the Anglian or Wessex coasts, but it is seen to this day on the Northumberland coasts, especially where the great sand-flats extend far out to sea, and are covered daily by the tide. In the course of a severe three days' frost, the sand-flats become one vast ice-field, many hundreds of acres in extent and five or six inches in thickness. The tide daily breaks this up and carries the broken masses about; fresh ice forms on the vacant parts, and this is again broken up, till, as the storm comes in, the welter of ice and water is amazing. "Where, as happens in such extremity of cold as we experienced" (and I quote from Abel Chapman's *Bird Life of the Borders*, p. 165) "in the winter of 1878–79, and again in January 1881, the frost continues unbroken for weeks at a time, the phenomena created by the ice and tide are almost incredible save to those who have witnessed them. The masses of detached ice, split up by their own weight into fragments of all sizes and shapes and carried here and there by the currents, drive helter-skelter in the tideway, and along the lee shores are thrown up into ridges and rugged piles, extending for miles along the shore. Outside this glacial barrier of stranded blocks, the floating floes, carried along by the strong tide currents, grind and crash against each other, piling up table on table till they become miniature icebergs, and form a spectacle such as few have seen outside the Arctic regions." If this took place in Northumberland in 1881, what must it have been in the eighth century, when the winters, owing to the vast extent of the forest land, were much colder than now, and the snowfall much heavier. The Northumbrian poets saw this continually, and described it, but the Wessex and Mercian folk did not see it at all.

and longing of a seaman's life, and who spoke to men who, being themselves seamen, would understand him. It is not a passage which a poet, writing in Mercia or Wessex, was likely to have written. Again, if we allot the last part of the *Guthlac* to Cynewulf, and we may do so with the greatest probability, the supposition that he was a Northumbrian of the seacoast is strengthened. The voyage over the fens is turned into a sea-voyage. It is as if the poet knew nothing of the reed-fens, but described what he did know — a passage by sea from one point of the coast to another. If, again, we allow that one of his school or he himself wrote the *Andreas*, the Northumbrian origin of Cynewulf is so far strengthened.

The scenery of that poem closely resembles the coast-scenery of the North. The writer was evidently a sailor; there is even, as I hold, a personal statement of this in the poem.[1] No inland man, no Mercian, is likely to have written that voyage. Moreover, I do not know of any place on the coast of Wessex where a sea-poet was likely to write. Many such places did exist on the coast of Northumbria — Whitby, Hartlepool, Jarrow, Tynemouth, Lindisfarne, Coldingham, — all centres of learning, and all in constant sea-communication. Many stories in Baeda make us aware that sailing, and in rough seas, went on continually along that coast. The atmosphere of the *Christ* and the *Elene*, and of the end of *Guthlac*, to say nothing of the *Andreas*, is as Northern as that of the sea-pieces in the *Riddles*. An "atmosphere" is perhaps poor evidence, but it is of value when it goes with other probabilities. Moreover, it is not such weak evidence as it seems. One might say, for example, that Tennyson could never have lived on the Northern coast. His atmosphere is of the gentler lands and coasts below the Humber; and I can no more conceive the *Elene* and the *Riddles*, *Guthlac* and the *Andreas*, being written on the Southern coast or inland, than I can conceive *Maud* being written at Bamborough or Whitby.

The second suggestion is that we have no proof that any school of native poetry existed either in Mercia or Wessex, while we have plain proof that a good school did exist in Northumbria. The simplest probability then is that poems of so high a class as the *Christ*, the *Elene*, and some of the *Riddles*, arose in a country where native poetry had been practised and nurtured for fully a century.

Thirdly, I may make another suggestion as to the Northumbrian origin of these poems of Cynewulf, by comparing the per-

[1] Lines 498–499.

sonal sentiment of them with the historical conditions of Northumbria. All the personal portions are marked by regret and melancholy, not only for himself and his sins, but for the state of the world in which he lived. He speaks in the *Christ* of how a man should nourish his soul, "while this world, speeding through its shadows, still shines for him, so that he lose not, in this fading tide, the blossoms of joy." The time is barren in which he lives. Life is "a dangerous stream of immeasurable waves, and these are stormy oceans on which to and fro we toss, here in this weak world, over the deep sea-paths."[1] These might be only personal phrases referring to his spiritual state; but they take a more national significance when we read, in the *Elene* and the *Fates of the Apostles*, how wealth is fleeting under heaven; how all the treasures of earth glide away like water, or pass like the wind which rushes through the sky and then is shut in silence and in prison. Even more remarkable are the expressions in the introduction to *Guthlac*. "The glory of all the fruit of earth is smitten with eld; all the kinds of growth change away from loveliness; the latter tide of every seed is now weaker of virtue; therefore no man may dare to hope — face to face with this world's change — that the world will bring him any fair delight."[2] This note of retrospective melancholy, which is the undertone of all these poems, does not suit the life men lived in Mercia when Æthelbald and Offa, with only a short break of disaster between them, lifted Mercia into prosperity and fame, from 716 to 796; nor does it suit the national life of Wessex after the battle of Burford (754). Wessex was then looking forward, in fine fighting condition, active and young. Its position would kindle a poet into hope rather than inspire him with a melancholy regret. But Northumbria was exactly in the state which would be likely to produce the half-sad, half-despairing note of Cynewulf, who finds all his joy, not on the earth, but in the world to come.

This argument depends on the supposition that Cynewulf's signed work was written in the latter half of the eighth century. This is, however, generally confessed. We cannot place the *Christ* and the *Elene* until twenty or thirty years after the death of Baeda. We should have to place them even later if we thought that Cynewulf was born about the date of Baeda's death, as some persons have thought. I conjecture that he

[1] Lines 1584–1586, 850–856.

[2] No doubt such phrases belong to all sermonising. But they do not occur in the Cædmonian poems; and, moreover, Cynewulf was, I believe, a layman.

was born twenty years or so before Baeda's death, that he wrote the *Riddles* somewhere about 730 when he may have been twenty-five years old, and that the date of the *Christ* and the *Elene* varies from 750 to 780, when he may have been from forty-five to seventy years of age. As to the forward limit of their date, we need not discuss whether they belong to a time after the reign of Ælfred. Few persons, I imagine, hold that view. The question is, when did Cynewulf cease to write? and I think he had done so before the first Viking incursions on the coast of Northumbria. There is not a single allusion to these terrible strangers, and, given a writer so personal as Cynewulf, so sensitive to the sorrows of the world, it is very strange, if he were then writing, that not a trace should be found in his work of events like the storming of Lindisfarne and Jarrow, which terrified all Northumbria and brought horror to the heart of Alcuin far off upon the continent. The argument is stronger if we think that the *Dream of the Rood* is Cynewulf's last poem. It is extremely personal at the close, but not a word is there of the dreadful blow which fell with so dire a threat in it on Northumbria in 793. I hold then that Cynewulf had ceased to write before that year.

These are the suggestions that I make concerning Cynewulf's date and his dwelling-place. It is easy to throw doubt on his Northumbrian origin, but is very difficult to prove that he was not a Northumbrian. The probabilities point the other way. As to the statement that his poems, being in the West Saxon dialect, are most probably West Saxon, — it proves too much. It would prove that all Anglo-Saxon poems are also West Saxon, for they are all in that dialect; and the further statement that there is nothing in his language to testify to a Northumbrian origin is not true, and if it were, might only prove that the West Saxon translator was an intelligent and clever fellow.

The next matter is his life and his character. What do we know about them? The character of a poet may be partly inferred from his style, from his mode of seeing and thinking of the things concerning which he writes, from the changes in his writings as he grows older. But very little weight belongs to such inferences unless we have some known foundation to build upon. We do possess this in the case of Cynewulf. We have four distinct revelations of his feelings and thoughts in poems signed by himself. Inferences then which do not quarrel with these known things are, in this case, of some value,

and the fact is that Cynewulf stands before us with some clearness.

We know less of his life than of his character. The allusions which concern his life are vague, and the temptation to take other poems, like the *Wanderer*, to call them Cynewulf's, to add their personal detail to his life, and to build up, in theory, a complete biography, is very great. A series of guesses, made by allotting to Cynewulf any poem in which a few lines occurred to fit their theory, enabled some critics to build up Cynewulf's life from his cradle to his grave. This is an agreeable exercise, but it is not history. What we do know I shall now put down in Cynewulf's own words, quoting the passages of which I have spoken. They will tell us something of his character and something of his life; and whatever inferences or additions to these I shall make shall be recorded as inferences alone.

We have to begin with something of an assumption. I assume that he wrote the *Riddles*. The proof that he wrote them, which is derived from the supposed enigma on his name in the first Riddle and from the explanation of the last Riddle as the "Wandering Singer," is, as I said, not clear. But, for other reasons as well as this, the critics in Germany and England have, with few exceptions, accepted him as their writer. If then they are his work, they tell us what he was as a young man. It is plain he was a lover of nature and of animals; that nothing human was alien to him, and to such a degree that the human impersonation of inanimate objects, which the form of the Riddle demanded, was especially easy to him and delightful. He was a close observer and accurate recorder of all he saw and heard; imaginative also, and rejoicing in his imagination; a natural poet to whom everything he saw was a subject; moving (and here I must repeat a little) at ease among rich and poor; as ready to verse a rude, even a coarse song, for the peasant or the soldier as a lay of battle or of ancient wisdom for the Ætheling, the abbot, or the king; loving praise in the hall, and fond of gifts; loving solitude also when the fit came on, and hiding himself from men; having a clear consciousness of his worth as a poet; gay, ready for sports, riding with the troops of young men; indifferent to religion, but not irreverent; not much troubled with morality, and so little that he looked back afterwards on his life as weighted with sins; sensitive, and one who felt friendship keenly, — such is the picture we should be likely to make of the man who wrote the *Riddles*, and much of it is borne out by the signed statements

of the *Christ* and the *Elene*. When he recalls his youth in the *Elene*, he speaks of the treasures, the appled gold, which once were given him in the mead-hall, of his horse proud of its equipments on which he measured the miles of the road, of his joy and pride of yore, of his youth and its gaiety.

The time came when this careless happiness passed away "like the hasting waves," he says, "like the storm which ends in silence." Some overthrow happened, such as might easily occur in the tempestuous anarchy of Northumbria; and many, taking the *Wanderer* to be written by him, say that the description of the exile's fate in it is Cynewulf's description of what happened now. Such a fate may indeed have been his, but we do not know. What we do know is that we find him next in the bitterest sorrow, convinced, as men say, of sin; fear of the wrath of God lying heavy upon him, and so bitterly smitten by remorse that his song-craft left him; he was no more a poet. Then he had a revelation of the redeeming power of the Cross of Christ. Hope entered his soul, and I believe, but cannot say for certain (this is one of the inferences), that the *Dream of the Holy Rood* is his poetic account, written in old age, of this moment of conversion. At any rate, and here we return to the certain, the craft of song returned to him with the beginnings of hope. God Himself, he says, unlocked the power of poetry in his breast; and the first thing that he wrote was the *Juliana*.[1] In that he is still despondent; little spring or life balances the remorse which weighs upon him, and he implores all those who read his book to pray for him. Here is the passage, and we see the man. The runes, which I print in Roman letters, and which have only here the value of letters, spell the name Cynewulf.[2]

[1] I feel inclined to think that the first part of *Guthlac* (A) preceded the *Juliana*.

[2] The Runes used are, ᚳ : ᚣ : ᚾ : ᛖ : ᚹ : ᚢ : ᛚ : ᚠ :. C. Y. N. E. W. U. L. F. Two only of the four passages which contain these runes include the E. rune, the ᛖ. These are in the *Juliana* and the *Elene*. It is not found in the passages in the *Christ* and in the *Fates of the Apostles*. Cynewulf then spelt his name in two ways, with and without the *E*.

These runes have in the *Juliana* only the value of the letters of his name. They do no more than spell *Cynewulf*. But in the three other poems, they stand not only for the letters of his name, but have also the meaning of the runes themselves, that is, of the words by which the runes are named. These meanings are to be read into the verses. When, for example, we read ᚴ *toglideð — L. ebbs away*, we translate the rune ᚴ into the name by which it is called, into *Lagu, water*, and read, *water ebbs away*, and we do the same thing for all the other runes.

Each of these three passages is then a kind of riddling charade on his name,

"Great need have I," he says, "that this Holy One (Juliana) should make help for me, when the two married ones, the soul and body, the dearest of all, break up their kinship, and my soul go out of my body on voyage to the unknown land, to seek another shore, for sins done long ago."

703. Sorrowful is wandering
C; and *Y* and *N!* He, the King, is wrathful,
God, of conquests Giver! Then, beflecked with sins,
E and *V* and *U* must await in fear

and a runic puzzle. The meanings, or rather the words which name the runes in all these three sets of verses, are as follows: —

C. stands for *Cene, the keen, the courageful warrior.*

Y. stands for *Yfel*, which means "as a masculine adjective, *wretched;* or as an abstract noun, *misery.*"

N. stands for *Nyd, necessity, hardship.*

E. stands for *Eh, horse.*

W. stands for *Wyn, joy.*

U. stands for *Ur, our.*

L. stands for *Lagu, water.*

F. stands for *Feoh, wealth.*

These meanings fit all the three passages; that is, they are easily connected with their context in all the passages. The same rune has the same meaning throughout.

This unity of interpretation has been brought about by Mr. Gollancz. It did not, in the case of four of the runes exist until his edition of the *Christ.*

C. was taken to mean sometimes *Cene, keen,* and sometimes *Cen, a torch,* the name of the C. rune in the runic alphabets. Y. was taken to mean *Yr,* the Norse name for the Bow, by which name it is called in the *Rune-poem* which was written in England after the Danish invasions, but, as this gave impossible meanings to the text, it was said to signify *Yrmðo, misery.* W. was sometimes taken to mean *Wyn, joy,* and sometimes *Wen, hope.* U. was the great difficulty. Its name in the *Rune Song* is *Ur, a bull,* and some scholars thought that Cynewulf took it in that sense. Others said that *Ur* meant *property* in general (oxen being one of the chief sources of wealth). Others took it as the adverb *Ur, formerly;* but this adverb does not occur in Anglo-Saxon. These are the divers meanings given to these four runes. It was important to get the same meaning in all the three passages to each rune. That was not impossible with C. and W. But it was thought to be impossible with regard to Y. and U. till the appearance of Mr. Gollancz's edition of the *Christ,* to which he added an *Excursus on the Cynewulf Runes.* His explanation of the Rune Y. as *yfel,* and of the Rune U. as equivalent to *Ur, our, noster* (he discovered *Ur* glossed as *noster* in a Runic alphabet), has, I think, settled the question. These explanations fit in with the context in all the three passages.

When I originally wrote this chapter, this note did not exist, and all the new information contained in it is taken from this *Excursus* in Mr. Gollancz's book, an early copy of which he was kind enough to send to me. I had also, following the greater number of critics, translated the Y. and the U. runes by *Yrmðo* and by *Ur* in the sense of *formerly,* and the C. rune in the passage in the *Elene* by *Cen, a torch.* I was now compelled, while the book was going through the press, to rewrite this chapter and the translations, so far as they were affected by the new meanings given by Mr. Gollancz to these runes. However, when it was done with the help of his discovery, I felt all the satisfaction a person feels who, long tossed on an uncertain sea, finds himself at last on firm land. Those who wish to pursue the subject further, and to see it thoroughly penetrated, will do well to obtain *Cynewulf's Christ, edited by Israel Gollancz and published by David Nutt, in the Strand, London.*

What, their deeds according, God will doom to them
For their life's reward! *L* and *F* are trembling,
Waiting, sad with care. Sore I now remember me
Of the wounds of sins wrought by me of old,
Or of late within the world.

"Weeping, I mourn them with tears. All too late I shamed me of my evil deeds; while as yet body and soul voyaged in health together on the earth. So I pray that every man, who shall read this song of mine, may think of me and ask of God that He, the Helm of Heaven, may bring me help in that great Day." This is the personal cry in the *Juliana*, and it is made more personal by his appeal for prayer to his hearers.

In the *Christ*, which is the next poem we know to be his, this note of melancholy continues, but with a difference. He is still hard pressed with the result of ancient wrong-doing. "How are we troubled," he cries, "through our own desires! Weak, I wander, stumbling and forlorn. Come, King of men, tarry not too long; we need thy mercy that we may do the better things." But there is also another note — the note of peace almost attained, of a modest and chastened joy, and these two mix their music, like life and death, throughout the poem. The personal passage in which he records his name in its runic letters belongs to his sorrow. He is looking forward to the coming of Christ to judgment, and fear holds him for a time. "I dread," he says, "the sterner doom, because I did not keep faithfully what in books my Saviour bade me; therefore shall I see terror and vengeance for my sin, as full well I know."

797. Then the *Courage-hearted* quakes, when the King he hears
Speak the words of wrath — Him the wielder of the Heavens —
Speak to those who once on earth but obeyed him weakly,
While as yet their *Yearning pain* and their *Need* most easily
Comfort might discover.

"These shall await their judgment;" but he has now turned from his own fate to the overthrow of all the earth, comparing its ancient destruction by a flood of water to its coming destruction by a flood of fire, — and into three of the words he sets the remaining letters of his name, omitting the *E* —

805. Gone is then the *Winsomeness*
Of the Earth's adornments! What to *Us* as men belonged
Of the joys of life was locked, long ago, in *Lake-flood*,[1]
All the *Fee* on earth.

[1] Lake-floods, is *Lagu*, and means the great water of the Flood; but I have kept the word Lake, in order to retain the letter L. in Cynewulf's name.

Thus he records his name in a passage as sad as that in the *Juliana*. But a change, a progress has taken place in his mind; the sadness is no longer unrelieved. Only a few lines farther on, at line 851, occurs that lovely strain (translated vol. i. 256) in which he describes the voyagers upon Life's sea, and how, "at last, after the frightful stream of overwhelming waves, help came, and the Spirit-Son of God led us into the haven of salvation which the Heavenly Father had outspanned for us." Peace and holy hope had then entered his heart, and the close of the *Christ* is a triumphant song of the bliss of those who hunger and thirst no more. So far then, without any theory, we may see into the story of his heart. With this new restfulness and comfort the note of the *Phœnix* agrees. The *Phœnix* is an unsigned poem of Cynewulf's, written, it is most likely, after the *Christ*. In it he has passed from doubt and fear into a rapture of faith. Passage after passage is full of that lyric joy which, men tell us, belongs, at least in the early days of that bright conviction, to those who feel themselves saved. "The Lord of Victories we shall see" —so ends the *Phœnix*, — "world without end; and with laud perennial sing praise to Him, happy with angels, Hallelujah!"

Between the *Christ* and the *Elene* I am inclined to place the *Fates of the Apostles*, and I should still give it this position, even if it be, as Mr. Gollancz suggests, the epilogue to the *Andreas*. The personal passage in that poem containing the poet's signature, conjectured long since, by Wülker, to exist, was lately discovered at Vercelli by Professor Napier. Cynewulf has said to his readers, alluding to the runes he is going to insert: "Here may find out the wise in forethinking, whosoever joyeth him in songs, what man it is that wrought this lay." The runic letters of his name now follow, but not, as in the other poems, in order. They begin with *F*, the last letter of his name; W, U, and L follow; then come C and Y. "Wealth (*Feoh*) stands at an end; earls enjoy it on earth, but they and it cannot abide together in this world's life. Joy (*Wyn*) shall fall away; our (*Ur*) joy upon the earth. Then drop asunder the fair trappings of the body, as Water (*Lagu*) glides away." The next two lines contain C, and Y, but N has been obliterated. Mr. Gollancz restores them thus. "Then the bold warrior (*Cene*) and the afflicted wretch (*Yfel*) shall crave for help in the anxious watches of the night, but Destiny (*Nyd*) o'errules, the king exacts their service." "Now thou canst tell," Cynewulf goes on, "who has here made himself known to men." Then he repeats the cry in

the *Juliana*. He asks again for prayer; for "I must, henceforth, alone, search out my long home, a land lying where I know not. Strange dwellings are they, that land and that home; strange to me, strange to all, save we hold fast to the Spirit of God. All the more zealously let us cry unto God, praying for a home in the height where the King of Angels granteth the spotless an unending meed. Now for ever His praise be great and His might abide ever-youthful, everlasting, over all the universe." Thus the strain of regret for the fading of the world is again mingled with Cynewulf's higher strain of faith.

This passage leads us on to another personal passage in the *Elene*. It is like a rough sketch of the completed picture in the *Elene;* just as the use of the heroic manner and the words of Sagadom in the introduction and body of the *Fates of the Apostles* are, as it were, a trial beforehand of the new heroic manner and verse which he was to use in the *Elene*. Indeed, it is this double impression of a "study," as it were, for more finished work which induces me, in spite of its weakness and dulness, to place the *Fates of the Apostles* here, so late in Cynewulf's life. Otherwise it is scarcely credible that its conventional verse could be written between the *Christ* and the *Elene*, when Cynewulf was at the zenith of his power. If it be right to place it here, it must have been written to order, and at a time when he was depressed or ill; and such strange descents in force and imagination are not uncommon in the history of poets — men who are an uneasy sea, ebbing and flowing, none knoweth why. Fluctuation is everywhere written in Cynewulf's work.[1]

But when we get to the *Elene* we are in the presence of a poet whose last known work, written, as he tells us, when he was advanced in years, was done with his full power, and in a new fashion of thought and verse. Yet there is little of old age in it. The spirit of it is almost as young as that of the *Riddles*. He uses, with fuller power and with more art than he has before done, the quick-hammering strains of the short

[1] I leave this as it was written, because I am not sure that I can as yet agree with Mr. Gollancz that the *Fates of the Apostles* is the epilogue to the *Andreas*, and therefore that the *Andreas* was written by Cynewulf. I wish I could at once confess that he is right, for then the difficulty of the dulness of the *Fates* at this time of Cynewulf's life, would no longer exist. The *Fates* would then appear only as a tag to a brilliant piece of work like the *Andreas* done with Cynewulf's full power. No one would then ask that the epilogue should be as good as the poem it follows; we should judge the *Fates of the Apostles* from quite a different standpoint.

epic line. He uses, with the greatest freedom, the old saga-phrases of warfare by land and sea; and in order to use them, he leaves his original behind and invents the course of the battle with the Huns and the expedition to Greece. It is as if he had received a new impulse of song, as if a fresh range of work had opened for him. Instead of becoming less the artist as age grows on, he becomes more the artist.

This is a curious point of character, and I have a theory concerning it which, if it be true, illustrates the biography of his soul. As long as he was troubled in mind about his sins, lately joined to the band of converted sinners, he kept his poetry clear of all the heathen phrases, of all the forms of heroic poetry; and this may have been urged on him by the pious who dreaded his relapse. But when his soul was fully at rest, as we leave it in the *Christ*, his original bardic nature resumed its sway. Certain now of God's love, full of faith in redemption, he is no longer afraid to use the phrases about war and the passion of war which his forefathers used. He no longer limits his inventiveness to sacred things, nor fears to let his imagination play at ease. The heathen ornaments and illustrations, the epic manner of *Beowulf*, are now brought in to enliven Christian stories. It is as if the old man loved to sniff again the breath of pagan war, as if the very sound of the stock words used by the Scôp in a song of battle, had pleased him as much as they pleased him in his youth. This is a wonderful resurrection, and the *Elene* is written in the air of its morning. This theory of an artistic change in Cynewulf's life is made more probable if we allot the *Andreas* to him. That poem is even bolder than the *Elene* in its use of heroic terms, in its free play of the imagination on the subject matter. It is full of the freshness of a new youth, of an unconventional pleasure in a new artistic world; and it is more individual, more English, more frank than even the *Elene*. It is, if it be Cynewulf's work, the poem of a man who had found new powers in himself, and was enchanted to find them, and to use them. There comes a time in an artist's life when he has learnt to manage his tools so easily, after long labour, that he attains almost automatic facility in execution. Then, since he has no need to give much trouble to execution, ideas stream in upon him in a flood, and he is able to do what he likes with them. Joy and freedom and force fill his soul. He renews his youth, but he has the power to embody ideas fully, a power his youth had not. And this, perhaps, was Cynewulf's now.

It is quite in accordance with this theory that the personal epilogue of the *Elene* should tell us how he came to write the poem, and that it should recapitulate his life, first in simple verse, and then in a riddling representation under the Runic letters of his name.

"Thus I," so he begins, "old and ready for death in this frail tabernacle" —

1237. Craft of words have woven, wondrously have culled them out
Over it, and o'er it thought, anxiously have sifted,
In the night, my thinking! Never throughly did I know
Rightly of the Rood the truth, till a roomier knowledge
Wisdom had unveiled to the inwit of my soul,
Through a might majestic.

Then he recalls what he had been, how light came to him, how the power of song returned; God Himself restored it.

1243. I was stained with mis-deeds,
Snared with sins was I, with my sorrows tortured,
Bound with bitter thoughts, burdened sore with troubles,
Ere the Lord gave lore to me through a light-imparting
Form;[1]
For my solace, now I'm old! 'Tis a gift unshameable
Me the mighty King has measured; in my mind outpoured it;
Dazzling has unfolded it, day by day for it made room!
He my bone-coffer unbound, He my breast-locker unwound,
He unlocked the singing art, that I used with all my heart,
With a will, the world within.

Then he recurs to his subject of the Cross of Christ, "the tree of glory," and at first speaks of the story he has just told, of the Invention of the Cross, and of his meditation of it. "Not only once, but often, I had inward thinking of the tree of glory, before I unveiled the wonder which enwrapt the bright wood; as in books, and in the course of history, and in writings, I found all made known that concerned that beacon light of victory."

But now, at line 1257, as I explain the passage, he turns from the story of Helena to speak directly of the story of his own soul. He calls to remembrance his own *Finding of the Cross* in his life; it is of the hour of his conversion that he is thinking when he says, "Till *then* I myself was crushed" — till the hour I found the Rood in my heart. Here is the passage, and

[1] I suggest that this may mean the form, the vision of the Cross — that is, if we take the *Dream of the Rood* to be written by Cynewulf; but the words might be translated, "in His luminous way," or "through light-bearing office."

though made obscure by the various meanings which may be given to the runes in which he signs his name, the general biographical direction of it is clear, and so is the state of his soul.

1257. Aye till then was ill-content!
Beaten by care-billows, *C* began to fail,
Though he in the mead-hall took of many treasures,
Of the appled gold. *Y* was wailing sorely!
N was his companion; harrowing was the grief he brought,
'Twas a Rune that cramped him,[1] when before him *E*
Paced along the mile-paths, proudly raced along,
Prankt with woven wires. *W* is weakened now!
After years, my pleasure and my youth are passed away,
And my ancient pride! *U* was in the times of old
Once a gleam of youth. Now the gone-by days
Far away have faded when the fated hour came —
Vanished, with delight of living, as when *L* doth fall apart,
Flood that follows flood *F* for every soul
Is but lent below the lift, and the land's adornments
Vanish all the welkin under, to the wind most like
When in sight of men, roaring, it up-steps the sky,
Hunts the clouds along, hurries raging on,[2]
And all suddenly again silent is become,
In its clampèd chambers closely prisoned now;
Pinned with mighty pressure down.[3]

"So has all this world passed away," and so is Cynewulf's melancholy note struck again; but he does not remain in it. He passes on into triumph, and the *Elene* ends with a picture of the righteous, victorious in beauty.

With the *Elene* the poems signed by Cynewulf come to an end; but there is yet another poem, the conclusion at least of which I believe to be written by him, and this conclusion was, in my opinion, the last thing he ever wrote. This poem is the *Dream of the Rood*, and the questions regarding its authorship, and the poem itself will be hereafter treated. At present, I assume that the conclusion is his, and it closes then this sketch

[1] *Enge rune*, "a narrow rune." A secret grief that bound his soul in a prison of pain. The rune itself may be alluded to.

[2] This is the old imagination of the Wild-Hunt in the sky, which Grimm traces back to the worship and name of Woden. But I think it is older far than Woden.

[3] C. stands for *Cene*. "The *keen warrior* began to fail."
Y. stands for *Yfel*. "The *wretched one* was wailing."
N. stands for *Nyd*. "*Need* was his companion."
E. stands for *Eh*. "When before him the *Horse*."
W. stands for *Wyn*. "*Joy* is weakened now."
U. stands for *Ur*. "*Ours* was once the radiance of youth."
L. stands for *Lagu*. "As when Water falls apart. Day after day, like wave after wave, falls apart, the one from the other."
F. stands for *Feoh*. "*Wealth* is but lent" etc.

of his character. Cynewulf, looking back when all his poems were finished, has resolved to place on record and to glorify the Dream and the happy hour he had when first he knew Christ; and then, saying farewell to life, to express his joy in the heaven whither he was going. "The Rood of the Lord which I erst beheld" (*aer sceawode*) is a phrase which seems to say that he is speaking of a vision seen at the beginning of his Christian life. He tells that vision in the previous part of the poem, either in his own words, or in editing an old fragmentary poem on the same subject, and he tells it always in the past tense. When the story is told he begins at line 122 his personal confession, and the resemblance it bears to the conclusion of the *Elene*, and the spirit of the verse, full at first of his pathetic individuality, and then marked by his rushing and exultant manner when he is engaged in hope or praise, are so like Cynewulf's work, and so unlike the work of any other Anglo-Saxon poet, that I cannot see why a critic should go out of his way to allot the poem, or at least this conclusion of it, to another writer.

The first lines of this personal confession are still retrospective. They tell how he felt immediately after the Dream, which I place at the time of his conversion, and as its cause. He felt "blithe of mood," for he was forgiven; "passionate in prayer, eager for death," — common feelings in the hearts of men in the first hours of their religious enthusiasm.

122. Then I prayed me to the Tree, pleasant of my mood,
With a mickle eagerness, where alone I was
With a smallish company; and my spirit was
Passioned for departure.

This is followed — so I read the passage — by two half-lines which tell us that he did not die, as he then desired, but was forced to live on through many days of sorrow —

Far too much have I endured
In all long-wearying days.

So far the verses seem retrospective. Now he turns to the present and describes his actual state of soul —

126. *Now* the hope of life is mine
So that I may seek — and with service due,
All alone, and oftener than all other men,
Honour Victory's Tree! Will I have to that,
Mickle in my mind! I have made my refuge
Ready near the Rood.[1]

[1] "*I have directed my defence to the Rood*" is literal, but seems without meaning.

Then he remembers all the friends who have gone before him, and sings his death-song, waiting in joyful hope to meet those he loved at the evening-meal in heaven. "Few are left me now of the men in power I knew" —

131. Few of friends on earth! They have fared from hence,
Far away from worldly joys, wended to the King of Glory:
Now in Heaven they live, near to their High Father,
Wonning in their glory! And I wait me here,
(Living) day by day till my Lord His Rood,
Which I looked upon, long ago on earth,
From this fleeting life fetch my soul away: —
And shall bring me then where the bliss is mickle,
Happiness in Heaven! There the High God's folk
To the Evening-meal are set, there is everlasting joy!
And He there shall place me where thenceforth I may
Dwell in (winsome) glory; well among the saints
In delight rejoice! May the Lord befriend me,
Who upon the earth long ago has suffered
On the gallows-tree for the guilt of men!
There He did release us, there our life He gave us,
And the heavenly Home.

At last, with a happy reversion to the earlier theme of which he was so fond — to the deliverance of the Old Testament saints from Hades — he turns from himself, now going home, to the triumphant home-coming of Jesus.

148. Hope was then renewed,
With fresh blossoming and bliss, for the souls who'd borne the fire:
Strong the Son with conquest was, on that (soaring) path;
Mighty and majestical,[1] when with multitudes He came,
With the host of spirits, to the home of God: —
He the Almighty King — to the Angels' bliss,
And to all the Holy Ones, who in Heaven long before
Had abode in glory — when the Omnipotent came home,
Where His lawful heirship lay — God the Lord of all!

This is the close of the *Dream of the Rood*. It is the close, in my opinion, of the work and life of Cynewulf. If it be truly his, we bid him farewell, with thoughts satisfied in quiet. His regret has merged in rapture. We see him pass away "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

[1] "*Majestical*" is *successful*, and "*home*" in the next line is literally *realm*.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SIGNED POEMS OF CYNEWULF

The *Juliana* is in the Exeter Book. In placing it first among the poems of Cynewulf, after the earlier Riddles, I differ from the greater number of the critics. I cannot class it after the *Christ*, for the *Christ* is written with all the poetic power which Cynewulf possessed, and a poet in his power does not fall back in a long poem into conventional work. He may do a short poem like the *Fates of the Apostles* in a weary manner, but not a long piece like the *Juliana*. I must then place it where it is.

Its sources are the *Acta S. Julianae, virginis, martyris.* Cynewulf has taken the legend and worked it up with some care for unity of feeling and for accumulating development. Juliana is led from triumph to triumph, till she receives the crown of life in death. One episode after another carries on the action, and these episodes are couched in dialogue. There is a leading thought, a special aim, and these are conducted, through such play and clash of passion as Cynewulf could conceive, to the final purification of the heroine whose image at last is left alone upon our minds. There is then a certain art in the poem. But the art is not good, and the work is poorly done. Abrupt changes, crude dialogue, wearisome repetition, but by no means so wearisome as we meet in the first part of *Guthlac*, disfigure Cynewulf's recast of the legend. I have a fancy that he was unconsciously bored by the whole matter, that Christian legend was so new to his genius that he worked it mechanically. Nevertheless, there are certain curious and clever things in the poem which I select in the following account of it.

In the days of Maximian there was a prince named Heliseus, a cruel persecutor of the Christians, whose heart began to love Juliana, daughter of Africanus, but she said nay to him unless he would become a Christian. "No torments," she

cried, "will make me waver from these words of mine;" so resolute is the woman! It is on this quality in her character, which Cynewulf sometimes makes into grimness, that he builds all the action of the poem. Her contempt works bitterly in Heliseus, and he and Juliana's father meet, "lean their spears together, sick with sins," and resolve to slay her if she do not yield. The sketch of the two furious men, set over against that of the delicate girl, is well conceived but ill wrought. The father speaks to his child, at first with love, and then with wrath. The dialogue which here is crisp, sets forcibly before us Cynewulf's conception of the strong-hearted heroine of the Cross. Yet he does not neglect to contrast with this the charm and tenderness of her womanhood. Her father calls her his "dearest daughter, sweetest to his imagination, his only one on earth, the light of his eyes." The people wonder at her beauty; Heliseus himself, when she is brought before him, breaks out, "Thou art my sweetest sunshine, Juliana; fulness of youth thou hast, infinite gifts of grace, and bloom of loveliness."

But her charm, which Cynewulf means us to keep in mind, for he brings it forth again at the close, now slips into the background, and henceforth he paints only the Amazon of the faith. Through one strife after another she passes, always firm as rock, always triumphant, but fixed as fate. The glory of the strength of the soul against wealth and physical pain, against the force of the world and the allurements of love, against the devil himself (always the art-motive of martyrdom), is seized on and told by Cynewulf, often at wearisome length, but as it were in a series of lays which, separately recited in the monastic hall, must have been effective. She is tortured the whole day and is victorious. Then she is thrown into prison, and a quasi-epic character is given to the poem by the introduction of the supernatural. As she sits in her cell, where her "eternal guard and companion is the Holy Ghost," one of the devils, sent by the chief Fiend, appears to her in angel-shape and bids her sacrifice to the Gods. "Whence art thou?" she cries; "I am," he replies, "an angel of God, and I bid thee save thyself." She answers by an impassioned prayer to God that He will keep her true, and reveal to her what kind of man is this — this "flier through the lift," who bids her fall away from God. And a voice answers out of the sky — "Grasp at the wicked one and hold him fast, until he tell thee all concerning his works." And the devil is forced to stay and talk all the night long, to his great trouble and dismay. Cynewulf

follows his original closely enough, but a certain grim humour steals into the account which seems to be his own. When the devil has told many of the wrongs he has done to men, Juliana is not content. "Say on," she says with endless curiosity, "thou poor, uncleanly spirit;" and the fiend, driven to distraction, "amazed with the woman," becomes impatient, breaks out into complaint, "This is a bitter business," he says, "an immeasurable oppression. I must tell all thou askest. Yet were I to speak all a summer-long day, I could never tell all my wickedness." Four times he despairingly tries to escape, four times she forces him back and insists on his telling all his crime. He tries compliment in vain. "No man was ever so brave as thou, O holy One, to lay hands on me; not one on all the earth was ever so high-spirited; not one of the patriarchs, nor yet of the prophets, could crush me as thou hast done, nor bind in bonds the strength my father gave to me, who sent me from the dark to sweeten sin to thee. Misery has come of that, and heavy battle. Never shall I dare, after this bitter punishment, rejoice amid my comrades for this voyage, when I shall bring back my wretched failure to my joyless dwelling."

At this point, for now it is day, and the governor summons Juliana, the devil, bewailing and beseeching Juliana to let him go, is let loose. "There is not a woman in the world," he cries, "of greater spirit, nor among maids one mightier in anger than thou art." The episode of her final martyrdom follows. She endures all, and every pain enhances her beauty. At last Heliseus bids her be beheaded. The fiend returns at this moment and sings a scornful song. Juliana glances at him, and he takes to flight. "Woe is me, accursed," he cries, "a second time she will disgrace me as before." Freed and victorious she makes now her last speech to the people, and here her softness and sweetness return. She is again the tender maiden, the loving spirit. "Peace be with you and true love for ever," she says and dies. Immediately on her death follows the death of Heliseus, robbed of his life at sea among the hungry waves; and in the den profound of hell none of his thegns received from him any more, on the benches of the beer-hall, rings or appled gold. But songs of praise went with the maiden's corse to the grave; and with this contrast the poem closes and is followed by the personal epilogue of which I have already spoken.

The *Christ* is a poem of far finer quality. It is formed into a whole. It is not a translation of a legend, it is original. It

has an epic march, or something that resembles it. Cynewulf has recovered his imagination, his freedom of movement, his shaping power. His dignified manner has come upon him, passion moves him, he rushes at times into an exalted strain, and he does this with ease; and he has sometimes even an heroic manner both in pathos and joy. There is an immense step between the *Juliana* and the *Christ*.

The *Christ* is contained in the Exeter Book, and it is the first poem in that book. But several leaves are lost. At the 8*a* leaf the poem begins, and it comes to a conclusion at leaf 32*b*. We owe to Dietrich the proof that all the hymnic poems in this section, which before his time were held to be separate, and some of them by different writers, are one connected whole, and written by one poet whose name is signed, concealed in runic letters, in the second part. He arranged these apparent fragments into their right order and said, "This is one poem, and Cynewulf is its author." His divisions of the poem were guesses. He had no opportunity of seeing the manuscript. It has now been divided rightly by Mr. Gollancz in accordance with indications in the manuscript. Part first celebrates the Nativity; part second, the Ascension; and the third part, the Day of Judgment. The first ends at line 438; the second at line 865. As to its sources, the first part follows the Gospel of St. Matthew for the story of the Incarnation. The second makes a free use of Gregory's homily on the Ascension. (Homil. xxix.) The third relies, as Professor Cook has shown, on the Latin Hymn — *De die judicii*, to which Baeda refers in his treatise, *De Metris*. The 10th homily of Gregory is also used in the second and third parts. But one can scarcely say that these were sources; they are, even when whole passages are followed, rather assistances. The poem is truly original, and originally conceived. It is the history, I might say the epic, of salvation.

Though I have used the word epic in regard to this poem, it is not an epic in any true sense of the word. It is more a series of hymns, at least at the beginning, closed by choric outbursts of praise. I fancy, however — for the third part is much more continuously wrought than the first or the second — that when the poet had written a number of these short pieces, a larger aim dawned on him, and then fully rose in his mind; and that then he determined to work his three subjects into a connected whole. If he went back for this purpose to his earlier labours, he did not fulfil his purpose well. The weaving together of the first part is not successful. The dif-

ferent pieces remain separate lays. In the second part the two subjects — the Ascension itself, and the ascension with Christ of the souls delivered from Hades into Heaven — might easily have been made into a continuous narrative if Cynewulf had thought of weaving them into one piece when he began. As it is, they remain distinct, loosely and awkwardly bound together. The third part shows, I think, that he conceived the Last Judgment as a whole before he began to write it; and it is then, when this was finished, that I suggest he went back and did his best to weld all the parts together, but without a complete success. Nevertheless, of all Cynewulf's poems the *Christ* is the weightiest, because in it he has made his greatest struggle towards an artistic unity, and has best shown in a sustained effort his constructive power. It is, moreover, essentially the work of a poet, though of a poet untrained in composition. The rushing outbursts of praise — the lyrics of the work — are poetry of a higher fervour than anything in the Caedmonic verse. In these he reaches his nearest approach to a fine style; and, as always with a poet, his style is a revelation of his character. We seem to feel the man himself when, in the contrast so natural to an artist, this trumpet-tongued piety and joy is succeeded by personal passages full of pathetic regret, repentance, and humility. In praise and prayer, in mournfulness and exultation, he was equally passionate.

The dramatic pieces are vividly represented, and the pictorial parts — the pictures of the ascent from Hades, of the opening of the Last Judgment, of the deluge of flame, of the blazing rood streaming with blood and set up from earth to heaven, of Christ pointing to it while he speaks, of the final ascension of the good — are done with all the poetic force of the writer of the riddle of the hurricane. I need scarcely draw any further attention to the personal epilogue except to say that no one who was not a true poet could have done it so well. There is nothing more difficult in poetry than to reach charm in a personal passage, and especially when it is set forward, as it is here, in a form which is half a riddle.

The mutilated manuscript of the *Christ* opens happily enough, by almost a fortunate chance. The broken first line has only one word "cyninge": to the King. It is not of course the title of the poem, but it would serve that purpose. An invocation to Christ to comfort, preserve, and glorify His own work, the Church, is preceded by an address to Him as the Wall-stone — that is, the Corner-stone —

2. Lo ! Thou art the Wall-stone which the workmen once
From the work rejected ! Well it Thee becometh
That Thou hold the headship of this hall of glory ;
And the broad-spaced walls of the flint unbreakable,
With a fastening firm, fitly knit together ;
That among the Earth-burgs all with sight of eyes
May for ever marvel !
Master of Magnificence !
Now through mighty wisdom manifest Thy proper work,
True-fast and triumphant-clear !

So the poem begins. A prayer follows that the Ruler who holds the locks, who opens life, will pity His people and make them worthy. We speak thus in our need, cries Cynewulf, becoming personal ; "we who in prison yearn for the sunlight, who must turn us to the narrow shore, cut off from our Fatherland." Then the Virgin and her miraculous conception of Christ enter the poem, and immediately, in one of those lyric outbursts for which the *Christ* is remarkable, Jerusalem the holy city is addressed —

50. See ! O sight of Peace, sacred Hierusalem !
Thou, of kingly thrones the choicest, Citadel of Christ,
Native seat of angels, of the soothfast souls
That for ever sit, they alone, at rest in thee,
In their splendours, singing joy. Never sign of stain
In that settled dwelling-stead shall be seen at all ;
But afar shall flee away every fault from thee,
All the curse and all the conflict.

As in the epic of Dante, Jerusalem is the centre of the universe. "The wide creation and the roof of heaven look on it from every side, and now the King of Heaven draws near to dwell in it. Bliss He brings thee, loosens thy bonds; He knows men's straitened need !"

At this point the dramatic dialogue begins, which may be of some literary importance. It seems to be the first dawning in our literature of the Mystery Play. I cannot but think that this part of the poem was written to be recited in the church, or in the market-place on a stage, and that the characters were taken by different persons. If so, we ought to look on the next few lines with the interest which should gather round the beginning of the English drama. The dialogue passages in the Caedmonic poems are such as we are accustomed to in epical verse. Here it is different. The characters are dramatically disposed; a certain scenic effect is made for their entrance, a choir seems to await them, as in the first lines

I translate, where Mary, coming into view, is hailed by the dwellers of Jerusalem, and they call to her to tell her tale[1] —

71. In the glorious glory, hail! Gladness thou of women,
Loveliest of maids in the lap of every land,
That the ocean-rovers ever listened speech of,
Make us know the mystery that hath moved to thee from Heaven.

"Mary, ever full of triumph," answers[2] —

89. What is now this wonder at the which ye stare,
Making here your moan, mournfully a-wailing —
Son of Solima; daughter thou of Solima?

"Ask no more; the mystery is not known to men; but the guilt of Eve is closed, the curse is overcome, the poorer sex is glorified. Hope is won that men may dwell with the Father of truth for ever."

A chorus to Christ follows this dialogue. "Hail, Earendel![3] sooth-fast, sun-bright; Sunbeam that enlightenest all the tides of time, come thyself, illumine those long since wrapt in darkness. Thanks to the Lord triumphant that he willed to send us himself." Then, turning to a favourite subject, the chorus speaks of the souls that long waited for Jesus, bound in the abyss, "weary, tormented thralls, worn with burning bitter tears." And the poet, in his swift impassioned changes, impersonates the souls in prison. They become the chorus. "Come to us here," they cry, "sad captives in spirit, kingly show forth thy mercy, O Christ the Saviour! Leave not so great a throng behind thy going hence." Then the dialogue begins again. Joseph arrives sad and troubled, on the scene, and Mary turns to him —

164. *Mary.* Ea, la, Joseph mine, child of Jacob (old)!
Kinsman thou of David, king of a great fame,
Must thou give up now grace so deeply set —
Let my love be lost?
Joseph. Lo, this instant I
Deeply am distressed, all undone of honour.

[1] Since I first wrote this passage I have seen Wülker's note in his *Grundriss* on the "Dramatische Bestrebungen" of the Anglo-Saxon poems, and though I do not feel inclined to give up the idea that these hymns were sung in parts in the church — which he himself conceives possible, — I think that all notion of their being represented on a stage, or dramatised in any true sense of the term, must be given up.

[2] Many previous lines concerning the miracle of the Incarnation weaken here the dialogue.

[3] *Earendel.* This means some brilliant star. Grimm suggests a connection with *Orvandels-tá.* Orwendel's toe which, frozen as Thor carried Orwendel through the sky, broke off. Thor threw it at the sky and it became a star.

"Sore speeches have I heard, insult to thee, mocking scorn of me. Tears I must shed, yet God may cure"

174. Easily the anguish deep that is in my heart,
And console me sad! Sorrow! sorrow! young girl!
Maid Maria!
Mary. Why bemoanest thou,
Criest now care-wearied? Never crime in thee
Have I ever found; yet thou utterest words —
As if thou thyself wert all thronged with sin!

Joseph — somewhat indignant with this feminine turning of the tables on himself (if this be the right allocation of the dialogue) — answers, with a certain sharpness but with dignity, that he has had already too much of bale from this child-bearing, but that silence or speaking is equally ill to him. If he speak, the daughter of David must die; if he be silent, he will have to live false-sworn, ill-famed, among the folk-men. Mary replies to this appeal in a speech of seventeen lines, with which the dialogue closes; nor is it in this form again renewed. It is as if Cynewulf wished to show his hand in this kind of art, and then laid it by. What does follow is another choric invocation which celebrates the begetting of Christ; and using the story of the creation of light as an allegory of the birth of Jesus, cries, "Come, Lord of triumph, graciously visit us; mercifully bless the earth" —

251. And the golden gates, that in gone-by days,
All too long of yore, locked together stood —
Order now to open, O exalted Lord of Heaven!
And then seek us out, through Thy very self a-coming
Meek to middle-earth! Of thy mercies we have need;
For the wolf accursed, beast that works in darkness,
Lord, thy sheep hath now scatterèd asunder,
Driven them devious, far.

"Save us then from the Baleful One, from the Slayer of the mind. Helm of all created things, free us from the Scather of men!"

The next canto celebrates the Virgin Mary, and takes, in order perhaps to bind it up with the preceding, the motive of the golden door, which here is made to mean Mary herself through whom Christ entered humanity. "O thou glorious lady of this middle earth," so it begins. She is the ring-

The word in Anglo-Saxon glossaries is translated *jubar*. Cynewulf used it to signify Christ, and as he is here speaking of Jesus as descended from David, I have no doubt he was thinking of the text in Rev. xxii., where Jesus says "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

adorned bride of heaven's Lord. The thegns of Christ, highest in heaven, name her Lady of the angel-hosts, and of the tribes of men, and of those who abide in hell; because she brought her sinless maidenhood to God. Isaiah [Ezekiel] spake of old concerning her. O'er all the land he looked and saw where stablished stood

308. Glorious an Ingang! Gate immeasurable!
All embossed it was with unpricèd gems,
Wound with wondrous bands.[1]

Only God shall make these gates resplendent, and Christ close them after Him for ever as with a key. We gaze on the Child on thy bosom, O plead for us with Him"; and this hymn, as I may call it, to the Virgin closes with another choric prayer to Christ.

The fifth canto begins with an invocation to the Trinity; and there is a fine passage concerning the singing and the flight around the throne of the praising Seraphim —

393. Ever and for ever all adornèd with the sky,
Far and wide they worship God the wielder of the world,
And with wingèd plumes watch around the Presence
Of the Lord Almighty, of the Lord Eternal!
All around the throne of God, thronging they are eager,
Which of them the closest may to Christ the Saviour
Flashing play in flight, in the garths of peacefulness!

And thus they sing —

403. Holy art Thou, holy, high Prince of archangels,
Thou true Lord of triumph, Thou art holy evermore!
King of kings art Thou, ever dwelleth Thy dominion
Over men on earth; and to all eternity
Worshipped wide and far, Lord of warrior hosts!
For Thou hast full-filled all the field of earth and heaven
With Thy splendour, shield of fighters!
Helm of all things! in the highest, be to Thee
Everlasting welfare, laud upon the earth,
Shining midst of men.

And now this first part of the poem is closed by a prayer that, with some feeling for art, refers back to the wonder of the Incarnation with which it began, but which itself is nothing but the same pious thoughts we have so often had before. This repetition is so frequent in the *Christ* that I am more and

[1] A noble doorway, *aeþelic ingong*. I have put this into the text because I think that the writer had in his eye the cover of a great missal, as well as such a church door as we see in Norway.

more inclined to think that these tails at the end of the narrative or dialogue passages were sung by full choirs in church, by the listeners in the monastery halls, or perhaps by the whole band of some mission expedition in town or village, when the chief singers had first sung the narrative and dialogue.

The second portion of the poem is taken up with the Ascension and that which followed and preceded it. The beginning links back to the Nativity, and then asks, with Gregory's homily — "Let a wise man seek out how it happened that though there were angels at the birth of Christ, yet they were not arrayed in white garments." *Now* when the "great leader gathered his thegns together at Bethany" before his Ascension, they did appear in white robes. After this fantastic question another half-dramatic dialogue begins. Christ speaks, and the verses embody the words of farewell in the Bible, with an addition such as would be made by a poet whose people had lately been idolatrous, and who were even while he wrote living in warfare. "Break the idols," Christ says, "overthrow them, abhor them; quench strife and hatred, sow peace among men." Then the Angels come, the King departs. Light glitters around his head, and the angels speak the first words of a new dialogue.

"Why do ye stay, why stand ye here, ye men of Galilee? . . . The Lord has mounted upward to his native home, to his Fatherland." The Apostles answer —

517. O how fain would we in this fashion, with this band,
With this cheerful company, o'er the cover of the Heaven,
To the brightening Burg, bring the Lord along.

The reception into heaven naturally follows the Ascension, and is slightly touched. The angels come to meet Christ; immeasurable joy fills the Glory, and Jesus takes his high seat, ruling in splendour mid-earth and the majestic host. So ends line 557. The order of the poem now becomes confused. An episode is introduced which concerns the Harrowing of Hell, an event which the legend always places after the Resurrection, and not after the Ascension. I conjecture that Cynewulf had these lines by him (ll. 558–585), and that they belonged to another poem, of which the *Descent into Hell*, in the Exeter Book, may be a fragment. When he was refitting the *Christ* into a whole, he inserted these lines which are full of imagination, and took no particular pains to fit them properly into their place; or he thought, perhaps, that they might

represent a hymn sung in heaven after the Ascension. The hymn would then describe the event, also an ascension, which had taken place forty days before when Christ brought up to Paradise the souls from Hades. Even if that be the case, the passage is most unhappily built together.

The episode (ll. 558–585) is really a choric hymn supposed to be sung by the host of angels who come forth from the gates of heaven on the day of the Resurrection to meet and welcome the Old Testament saints as, rising from Hades, they mount the sky with Christ. The scene is laid in mid-space. The angels from heaven have met the ascending bands, and when Cynewulf sees this mighty meeting in his vision, the warrior wakens in him, and the speech the angelic leader makes to his followers is such as a heathen chief might have made to his Lord returning from war with the spoils of victory. "Lo," the Angel cries, pointing to the approaching host of Christ and the delivered souls —

558. See, the holy Hero Hell hath now bereaved
Of the tribute all that in times of old,
In that (lawless) war, so unlawfully it gorged!
Overthrown are now, and in torment quick,
Hafted down and humbled in the Hell's abyss,
All the champions of the Fiend, cut off from their prowess;
Those who strove with Him might not speed in battle
With their weapon-whirlings when the warrior king of glory,
He the Helm of Heaven's realm, had arrayed the war
Right against his ancient foes, with his only might.
Then he drew from durance, from the devilish burg,
This the dearest of all spoils, this unnumbered folk.
Lo! the host itself here you gaze upon!
Now the Saviour of all souls wills to seek the throne
Where is given grace to spirits,[1] — He of God the proper bairn,
After his war-playing.

The speaker now turns from his own following to speak to the souls who have come from Hades, and to welcome them; and then turns back again to look towards the gates of Heaven, and bids them unclose. It is well imagined —

575. Forward now to friends, frankly march along,
With a gladdened heart!
O, ye gates unclose,
He will unto you, He of all the Wielder!
He the King into his city, He, Creation's Lord,
With no little army, now will lead his folk
To the joy of joys.

[1] "Wills to seek the gift-stool of spirits."

And the speech ends with a proclamation of peace and of the covenant of God with men. It is followed at line 586 by a *résumé* of the whole matter of the poem up to the present point, and this, I think, came originally after the 557 line before the insertion of the hymn. There is a passage in it which needs to be noted, because, while the alliterative stress is carefully observed, each limb of the verse is set in rhyme. "Every one," it says, "may now choose"—

591. As of Hell the scornful story, so of Heaven the noble glory;
As the lightsome light, so the loathly night;
Glory's rush of gladness, or of gloomy souls the sadness;
As with devils all discord, so delight with God the Lord;
Torment grievous with the grim, glory with the seraphim,
Either life or death!

Therefore it is fitting to thank the Lord. "He gives us food and the fulness of goods;"

605. Welfare o'er the wide-land and a weather gentle,
'Neath the shelter of the sky! Sun and moon alike,
Kingliest of the constellations, candles of the Heaven,
Shine on every man that on earth abideth;
Dew and rain descend, and they draw abundance forth!

But chiefly thanks are due to him of whom Job spoke, as of a bird, and well: for he winged his way to the angels' home; and thence again, at one with the Spirit, flew down at Pentecost and gave gifts to men. And here intervenes a passage of which there is a parallel in the *Gifts of Men*—a common motive for poetry, which, treated by Cynewulf, may boast itself of a finer poetic quality than is elsewhere shown.[1]

664. Sage the way of speech that He sendeth unto one
To the memory of his mind through the spirit of his mouth—
Noble mastery of thought. Many, many things
He can sing and say; in his soul is fastened
Weighty wisdom's power! Well another can
With his hand the harp awaken 'fore the heroes loudly,

[1] The origin of these English descriptions of the various gifts of men has been referred to the texts in 1 Corinthians concerning the gifts of the Spirit, to the Homily of Gregory, and other sources. There was also, I think, an independent heathen song on the matter. It is a subject which was sure to catch the thoughts of men. Homer himself has seized it. "Hector" (says Polydamas, *Iliad*, xiii.), "thou art hard to be persuaded by them that would counsel thee; for that God has given thee excellence in the works of war, therefore in council also art thou fain to excel other men in knowledge. But in no wise wilt thou be able to take everything on thyself. For to one man God has given for his portion the works of war, to another the dance, to another the lute and song, but in the heart of yet another hath far-seeing Zeus placed an excellent understanding."—Leaf's Translation.

Greet the glee-beam then. One the godlike law
May aright reveal. One the roaming of the stars
Tells — that wide creation. One the word men speak
Wisefully can write. War-luck on another
In the battle He bestoweth, when the band of shooters
Send the storm of darts o'er the shield's defence,
Winging-work of arrows. Boldly will another
Urge the ocean-wood o'er the salt sea-stream,
Stir the surging deep. One the soaring tree
Can, though steep, ascend. One can smithy well
Steelèd sword and spear. One the spacious ways
Knows and all the plains' outgoing. So to us the Lord,
Bairn of God, His gifts on the grounds of earth divides.

The next two portions which finish the "Ascension" are both of curious interest: the first for its allegorical exposition,[1] in the mediæval manner, of the text in Canticles; the second for its autobiographical detail, and for the sketch, the little "study," as it were, of the final subject of the Last Judgment. Of the allegorical six leaps of Christ I have already spoken in chapter xi. "So must we men," it ends, "leap from virtue to virtue to the highest height. Great is our need of salvation, for the Accuser" — and the reference is to the deadly arrow-flights of Northern war —

764. Midst the folk of God forth is sending now
From his bended bow the embittered shaft.
So that sudden shot let us stand on guard against,
Lest the point of poison, bitter-piercing dart,
Stormer of the shield, sudden-coming craft of foes,
Break in under the bone-locker. Baneful gash that is,
Lividest of wounds!

And now begins the last portion of the "Ascension." It falls into three divisions. The first, while it says that no one need fear the shafts of the Fiend if God shall shield him, suddenly breaks into that remarkable personal passage of which I have already spoken. The "Day of Doom" is near, he

[1] There is, beginning at line 692, an allegorical simile more fully developed than is usual in Anglo-Saxon poetry. I translate it: "God honoureth His work, even as the Prophet said" (*Ps.* cxxxvi. 7–9.)

692. That the holy gems were upheavèd (then)
Stars serene of Heaven, high unspeakably.
Moon and sun! O what may these be,
Gems so glittering bright, if not God Himself?
He is the soothfast shining of the sun,
For the angels, for earth dwellers, ever noble splendour!
Glimmers (mild) the moon o'er the middle earth,
Spiritual is that star! So the Church of God,
Through the congregations of the True and Just,
Beameth brightly now.

cries, "and I — I fear a sterner doom." This personal passage is the first hint of the subject of the third book; and the short sketch, the "study," as I said, for the finished picture of the third part, follows in this fashion —

807. Then shall all earth-glories
Burn within the bale-fire. Bright and swift
Rages on the ruddy flame, wrathfully it strides
O'er the outspread earth; sunken are the plains;
Burst asunder the burg-steads! See! the Burning on its way,
Greediest of guests, gorges pitilessly now,
All the ancient treasures that of old the heroes held,
While that on the earth pride abode with them!

When Cynewulf has finished his sketch he becomes personal again. "O our need is great, before that grim terror to bethink us of God's grace;" and he passes into that lovely sea-suggested passage which I have already translated, and in which his soul stands clear before us. As I have put it into a trotting rhythm before, so now I put it into blank verse, nor is that metre apart from its elegiac strain —

848. O great our need
That we bethink us in this fruitless time,
Ere that grim fear, upon our spirits' grace.
For now is it most like as if on ships
O'er water cold, on ocean's flood, we sail,
Driving the sea-wood through the far-spread deep,
On our sea-steeds. A dangerous stream is this,
Of endless waves, oceans wind-tossed, where we
About this swooning world swing to and fro
Upon the unfathomed road. Hard was our state,
Ere we had sailed across the storm-ridged deep
Safely to land; but then our help arrived,
That led us to the hithe where Healing is —
God's Spirit-Son, who gave us grace to know —
Outlooking o'er the bulwarks of our keel —
Where we should bind with anchors deeply set,
Our old wave-horses, stallions of the sea!
There in that haven, let us stablish Hope,
The which He roomed for us who rules the skies,
When he climbed Heaven, Holy in the height.

And now, at line 866, the Day of Judgment, the third part of the poem, begins. Like a thief in the blackness of night it surprises men. The blithe and shining host, the faithful of the Lord, assemble glorious on Mount Zion. Then Cynewulf, as if suddenly smitten with a vision (and he is the only Anglo-Saxon poet who has these poetic outbursts), breaks into a noble description of the four summoning angels —

878. Therewith from the four far-off corners of the world,
From the regions uttermost of the realm of earth,
All a-glow the angels blow with one accord
Loudly thrilling trumpets. Trembles Middle-Garth
Earth is quaking under men. Right against the going
Of the stars they sound together, strong and gloriously
Sounding and resounding from the south and north,
Wakening from the dead bairns of doughty men,
All aghast from the grey mould; all the kin of men,
To the dooming of the Lord. Out of that deep sleep
Suddenly they bid them rise.

After that "a blaze of sun comes from the south-east to the hill of Zion," and after the blaze the Son of God, "marvellously countenanced, diversely for the blessed and the lost, bitter for the baleful, benign for the blest." And on each side of him troops of angels and societies of the saints fare their way.

Another outburst of description, touched with a human interest, follows, and it rises in the last lines into imaginative splendour.

930. Deep creation thunders, and before the Lord shall go
Hugest of upheaving fires o'er the far-spread earth!
Hurtles the hot flame, and the heavens burst asunder,
All the firm-set flashing planets fall out of their places.
Then the sun that erst o'er the elder world
With such brightness shone for the sons of men,
Black-dark now becomes, changed to bloody hue.
And the moon alike, who to man of old
Nightly gave her light, nither tumbles down:
And the stars also shower down from heaven,
Headlong through the roaring lift, lashed by all the winds.

Then Cynewulf, who, while he loved the soft aspects of Nature, loved even more the raging sea and hurricane, again describes, when he has placed Christ on the top of the hill of Zion, the howling winds, the dreadful din that weakens and wastes the world, but chiefly the ocean of fire and its overwhelming of the earth; always however, in a manner which is his own, introducing his sorrow and pity for the fates of men. "Great and dire shall be the tribulations of the kin of Adam when that wan welter of fire, the swarthy flame — seizes on these three things — seas with their fish, earth with her mountains, and the upper heaven magnificent with stars."

972. So the greedy ghost shall gang searchingly through earth,
And the Flame, the ravager, with the Fire's terror
Shall the high up-timbered houses hurl upon the plain.
Lo! the fire-blast, flaming far, fierce and hungry as a sword,
Whelms the world withal! And the walls of burghs

In immediate ruin fall! Melt the mountains now,
Melt the cliffs precipitous, that of old against the Sea
Fixed against the floods, firm and steadfast standing,
Kept the earth apart; — bulwarks 'gainst the ocean billow
And the winding water. Then on every wight
Fastens the death-flame! On all fowls and beasts,
Fire-swart, a raging warrior, rushes Conflagration,
All the earth along.

Even the "white host of the archangels, bright as heaven," and now assembled round the sovereign God on Zion, trembles in that dreadful day. Much more the kin of Adam who now "rise quick and young again"; and in them as through a glass is clearly seen "the figure of their works, the memory of their words and the thoughts of their heart." This motive, with that of the terror and the fire, is now repeated in many different fashions, and as a kind of peroration to this part of the poem. It would be very tiresome reading were it not for the word-changes, and for a certain swirling of the verse which reveals the passionate feeling of the poet. We must remember, when we are weary of these repetitions, that what is written here was to be sung, not read.

Another theme is now taken up at line 1081 — the theme of the Holy Rood. It is nobly conceived. The Cross, standing with its root on Zion's hill, rises till its top strikes the sky. All the assembled hosts look upon it. Nor is it difficult to see, for by its light all things are seen. The sun is gone; it shines instead of the sun; it is the brightest of all beacons. All shade is banished by its brilliancy. From head to foot it is red, wet with the blood of the King of heaven. Christ is seen by all the multitude of good and evil crucified upon it. The good see it, and it brings brightness to their souls. The evil see it for their torment and their teen.

This fine imagination is followed by an account of the Crucifixion, and by a description of the agony of the whole creation in sympathy with the death of Jesus. This is a motive which is again taken up by the writer of the *Dream of the Holy Rood*. It seems to run side by side with the weeping of all things for the death of Balder. Whether that idea was imported into the Norse mythology from Christian mythology, or whether it comes down to both from similar myths more ancient than either, does not engage us here. It appears slightly in Gregory's Homily, but our interest here is the deliberate and close way in which Cynewulf works up the thought, and his representation of Nature's sympathy with man. The earth and sky and trees and seas share in the pas-

sions of humanity. To the statement that the sun was obscured, Cynewulf adds, "darkened with misery." When he speaks of the earthquake, he says not only that the "earth shook," but also that it was "marred by fear." Nay, the whole Universe was, like a living Being, conscious of the death of Christ.

1143. And the broad-set sea
Made its might of power known, from its clasping marges broke
Up in ireful fury, o'er the breast of earth!
Yea, their shining stead within all the stars forsook
Each his own aspect! On that very tide
Wist the lucid Heaven who it was had made it
So upsoaring and so sheen, with its starry gems.

Hell, also, the guilt-avenging, knew that the Maker had come, and gave up her hosts from her hot bosom. And the sea declared who had spread it forth, the trees told who had shaped them with their blossoming, when mighty God stepped up on one of them. Many a one was all o'er-run beneath its rind with bloody tears. Red and thick, their sap was turned to blood. Earth's dwellers cannot tell how many things inanimate yet felt within themselves the travail of the Lord.

The poem now turns to the division between the just and the unjust, and the three signs which mark the blessed, and the three others which indicate the cursed. Of these the only one worth dwelling on is the third sign of the blessed which might be due to the pen of Jonathan Edwards. "The happy band shall see the lost suffer sore pain amid the bale of darkness" —

1250. Flame that welters up and of worms the fierce aspect,
With their bitter-biting jaws — school[1] of burning creatures!
And from this a winsome joy waxes for the righteous.

There is not much of interest in the next portion of the poem, which is an enlargement of the reasons for the judgment of the good and evil given in chapter xxv. of St. Matthew's Gospel. The speech of Jesus to the good is short, but the speech to the evil is long and homiletic, and repeats, with the common aim of instruction, the whole story of the Fall, the Incarna-

[1] *Scole.* The Dutch speak of a *school* of fish. It is also a Lincolnshire word for a shoal of fish. It was, if I remember right, set apart by the Nantucket whalers to describe the herded households of the sperm-whale. I do not think that they employed it for any of the dwellers of the sea except the whale; and this usage of it for the great monsters when banded together may be as old as Cynewulf's time.

tion, the Crucifixion, and Resurrection. It is not devoid of nobleness, constantly changing too in metrical movement in accordance with the meaning, full of quick appeals, excessively personal (Jesus speaks as if he were speaking to one only among the vast host), well fitted then for use in a homily, a use to which I have no doubt it was put. Some passages in it must have been effective when sung in a kind of recitative. "I was born alone," one of these begins, and the lines run to a great length and must be thought of as sung with a rushing and impassioned speed

1421. All alone I was begotten
For the comfort of the folk ; with their hands they folded me,
Wrapped me in a poor man's weeds and within the darkness wound me,
All bedight with dusky swathing. Lo, for all the world, I endurèd this.
Of a little worth, I seemed, to the sons of men. On the flinty stone I lay
Young, a child within his crib.

Nor, indeed, is the passage less effective when Christ, apparently turning to the gigantic rood, as a Catholic preacher to the crucifix, points to himself hanging there, and cries to all the vast host of the lost, "See now the deadly wounds which men erst made upon my palms, and also on my feet, by which I hung, fastened most bitterly! Here, too, mayst thou look on the wound, blood-streaming, on my side. O how uneven there between us two the reckoning! . . . Why didst thou forsake the glorious life I bought for thee through love? Give me back thy life which I gave thee. I claim the life thou hast slain with sins. . . . Why hast thou crucified me worse upon the rood of thine hands than when of old I hung upon the tree?" The reasons of the sentence are now given which are written in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, and this passage ends — "Go now, accursed, cut off by your own will from angels' joy, into eternal fire, made ready, hot and grim, for Satan and his comrades, for all that dusky shoal. And the Ward of Empire is mighty and enraged, ireful and terrorful; no foe upon this path of earth may then abide his presence. For he sweeps down with his right hand the sword of victory, and the devils fall headlong into the den profound, into the swarthy fire." The rest is homiletic exhortation and the final locking of hell; and, at the last, the opening of heaven to the hosts of the just. Cynewulf's description of the perfect land closes the poem —

1649. There is angels' song, there enjoyment of the blest,
There belovèd Presence of the Lord Eternal,
To the blessèd brighter than the beaming of the Sun!
There is love of the beloved, life without the end of death;
Merry there man's multitude; there unmarred is youth by eld;
Glory of the hosts of Heaven, health that knows not pain;
Rest for righteous doers, rest withouten strife,
For the good and blessed! Without gloom the day,
Bright and full of blossoming; bliss that's sorrowless;
Peace all friends between, ever without enmity;
Love that envieth not, in the union of the saints,
For the happy ones of Heaven! Hunger is not there nor thirst,
Sleep nor heavy sickness, nor the scorching of the Sun;
Neither cold nor care; but the happy company,
Sheenest of all hosts, shall enjoy for aye
Grace of God their King, glory with their Lord.

The last of the signed poems of Cynewulf is the *Elene*. It is in the Vercelli Book, and contains 1321 lines. Its source, as Kemble and Grimm first laid down, appears to be the Latin life of Quiriacus or Cyriacus, Bishop of Jerusalem, written in the *Acta Sanctorum* of the 4th of May; but reasons have been alleged for thinking that some other life was used by Cynewulf. Some have thought — and the view is based on the Greek title of the poem — that the Greek life of Cyriacus, which is of the 3rd of May, may have been brought to England and followed by Cynewulf, but the mere form of the name cannot prove this, and Greek had decayed in England when Cynewulf was writing. Cyriacus is the Judas of the poem.

If Cynewulf used the life in the *Acta Sanctorum*, he used it with the freedom of a poet. He expands and contracts when he pleases, and he has interpolated two long inventions of his own. Professor Kent, in an excellent edition of the *Elene*,[1] has given the Latin text along with the Anglo-Saxon. Any one can now see without trouble where Cynewulf has followed, or not followed, his source; and the original matter in the poem seems worthy of the pains which Cynewulf says he bestowed on its composition. The subject is the *Finding of the True Cross*, and the action passes steadily on to this end. The Huns gather against Constantine as he lies asleep in camp, who dreams his famous dream of the Rood, and is bid to conquer by that sign. The battle follows, the victory, Constantine's study of the Scriptures, Helena's journey to Jerusalem, the council held by Helena with the Jews, the

[1] *Elene*, edited with introduction, Latin original, notes and glossary, by Charles Kent, Univ. of Tennessee. Ginn & Co., Boston and London.

separate council of the Jews when Judas advises them not to reveal the place of the Cross, his imprisonment, his release, his prayer to Christ, his declaration of the death of Jesus for the redemption of the world, the finding of the Crosses, the discovery of the true Cross by a miracle, the devil's indignation and speech, the reply of Judas, the message of Helena to Constantine, the baptism of Judas as Cyriacus and his appointment to the Bishopric of Jerusalem, the finding of the nails and the return of Helena. The last canto is Cynewulf's personal account of how he wrote the poem and of his state of mind.

Many have said that this is the finest of his poems, but I cannot agree with them. Cynewulf was at his best when he had to invent, not to follow. When he works as he does here, on a given story, his imagination seems fettered. It is very different when, as in the *Christ*, he is building his lofty song out of his own heart. It is different, even in the *Elene*, when he wholly abandons his original, and invents the battle, the sea-voyage, and the personal epilogue. These are excellent, and it is their goodness, I think, which has made the critics place the whole poem on so high a level. I have already translated them all and need dwell on them no more. The rest of the poem is, I think, extremely dull.

In the battle and sea descriptions many heathen terms are used which enliven and strengthen the verse. Moreover, those swift, surprising, vivid phrases which mark a poet; that word-invention of which every poet is fond at one time or another of his life, and which, in the shape more of double-shotted substantives than of adjectives, the Anglo-Saxon poets of Northumbria were only too eager to use — appear frequently in the *Elene*. The metrical movement and swing of the lines are much more fixed and steady than in his other poems. There are very few verses which even tend towards the long line that belongs to the Caedmonian poems. On the contrary, that short epic line is used into which, after Ælfred, all English poetry seems to have drifted, as we see for example in the songs of the *Chronicle*. Rhyme and assonance are also not uncommon. All these characteristics point to a time when the art of poetry had consciously adopted rules, and when the metrical freedom of the poet began to be more rigidly limited. It does not, however, follow that because a poet like Cynewulf adopted the short epic line in its strictness that he was precluded from using the long line of the Caedmonian poetry;

and whether he did use it in any later poem than the *Elene* is a question that will meet us when we describe the *Dream of the Holy Rood*, which, though I believe it to be at least partly Cynewulf's, I leave to the following chapter because it is unsigned by him.[1]

[1] I have said no more, in this chapter on the signed poems of Cynewulf, of the *Fates of the Apostles*. It did not seem worth while to treat of it apart. But when these pages had gone to press Mr. Gollancz's book on the *Christ* appeared, and I have placed in a note at the end of this volume his new theory concerning the *Fates of the Apostles* and the *Andreas*.

CHAPTER XXV

UNSIGNED POEMS EITHER BY CYNEWULF OR BY MEN OF HIS SCHOOL

The poems which still remain for appreciation have all of them been attributed by divers critics to Cynewulf. No positive proof, however, can be given of his authorship of them. Five of them are important poems—the *Guthlac*, the *Descent into Hell*, the *Phœnix*, the *Dream of the Rood*, and the *Andreas*. The order in which I have here enumerated them is probably the chronological order of their composition, but no evidence really worth having can be given for this order. I may then classify them as I please, and I take first the *Guthlac* and the *Andreas*, both of which are saint-legends, then the *Descent into Hell*, then the *Phœnix*, and lastly, the *Dream of the Rood*, because, as I have said, it closes in my opinion the life and work of Cynewulf.

The *Guthlac* is the story of that anchorite on whose island refuge in the fens the Abbey of Crowland was built. The poem is in the Exeter Book, and its conclusion is missing. There is scarcely any critic of importance who does not say that Cynewulf had a hand in it, and the second part at least is almost unanimously allotted to him. It is more than probable that we should find in its lost ending, had we but the luck to discover it, Cynewulf's signature in runes. The poem has been divided into two parts, and then into three, by various writers. Many attribute only the second part to Cynewulf; and those who think that he wrote the whole, think also, for the most part, that there was a long interval between the composition of the first and second portions,[1] between *Guthlac A*

[1] Rieger divides it into two, written at different times by Cynewulf. Charitius adopts the division, but only the second part is Cynewulf's. Lefevre divides it into three parts, with a long interval between the second and third parts. Dietrich and Morley say it is one poem by one hand. Wülker thinks that the second part is Cynewulf's and his earliest work! These differing doctors show at least that no clear conclusion has been arrived at.

and *Guthlac B.* The style and poetic power of the first are very inferior to the second. Moreover, the first part differs considerably from the *Life of Guthlac* by Felix, who may have been a monk of Crowland, while the second part follows that life closely.[1] On the whole, then, it is most probable that Cynewulf, at the beginning of his Christian life, while his imagination was yet hampered by his natural avoidance of all profane poetry, wrote the first part of *Guthlac* from oral tradition, and then, much later in life, when his imagination was delivered by the peace in his soul, took up his old work again, after the production of the *Life of Guthlac*, and added to it an end, with a special account of the anchorite's death. The free and noble manner of this part is a great contrast to the barren and limping movement of the first part. Could we but be certain that Cynewulf wrote both parts at different times, the comparison of the poet in the one to the poet in the other would be a fascinating bit of criticism.

One thing remains to be said. Mr. Gollancz tells me he has transferred to the beginning of *Guthlac* (which follows the *Christ* in the Exeter manuscript) a number of lines which have been usually printed at the end of the *Christ.* These form, he says, the true introduction to *Guthlac*, and he supports his opinion by the fact that there is a blank space in the manuscript before these lines begin. The *Christ* certainly ends better where he makes it now end, at line 1663. It is not so clear that the *Guthlac* begins better where he makes it begin —*Se bið gefeana faegrast.* It is a better beginning, as a matter of form, but the difficulty lies in this, that the quality of this new introduction, as poetry, is of a much higher value than the rest of the first part of the poem. It is, in fact, of the same poetic value as the *Christ* itself, with which it has been so long connected, or as the second part of *Guthlac.* It is not possible, I think, to hold that this introduction could have been written by the poet of *Guthlac A* at the time when *A* was written. It is not only a difference in artistic work which divides them, but it is a difference in thoughtfulness, in experience of life, such as, to compare small things with great, divides the outlook over life taken by Milton in the *Samson Agonistes* from that taken in the *Comus.* It is more than probable that Mr. Gollancz is right in tagging on these twenty-nine lines to the *Guthlac*, but I think he will have to say that

[1] If so, this partly dates the poem, for that life was written between 747 and 749.

they were placed there many years after the first part was written, when *Guthlac B* was added — about the time, that is, when Cynewulf wrote the *Christ*. Indeed, I think that the whole preface has been remodelled if not entirely written at this time. It is done with something of an artist's hand. The picture with which it begins is tenderly conceived, and tenderness is one of the qualities of Cynewulf's genius. The mournful note in it, the patriot's sorrow, belongs also to Cynewulf, and has some historical interest if we identify his life with the evil days of Northumbria. There is also a contemplative element in it as of one who had retired from the stormy world and was inclined, in the conventionality of conversion, to classify the different kinds of saints. In such a classification he easily slips into his subject. The life of Guthlac belonged to the highest class. He is one of the anchorites whom Northumbria's old traditions, derived from the Celtic monks, considered to live nearest to God. "Fairest of joys it is," so the poem begins, when at first they meet — the angel and the "happy soul who has forsaken the frail delights of earth." And sweet and tender is the greeting that the angel gives —

> Now mayst fare thy way whither fondly thou didst yearn
> O so long, and often times! It is I shall lead thee; —
> Pleasant are the paths for thee, and displayed for thee
> Glory's gleaming light. Way-goer art thou now
> To that holy home, harbour from afflictions,
> Whither sorrow comes no more. *Chr.* 1671 (*Guth.* 6).

From this, the introduction passes on through the classification I have mentioned to those chosen champions of God who dwell in wildernesses; and glides at once into the life of Guthlac in lines which seem to confirm the inference that this first part of the poem followed an oral tradition rather than the book of Felix. "Now we may declare what men of holy estate made known to us, how Guthlac directed his mind to the will of God."

The first part has but little poetic power of any kind, and the few lines in it which describe the hermit's life with nature have been already quoted. The second part reveals at once a more experienced and more imaginative hand. It takes up, after an homiletic account of the Fall, the story of the death of Guthlac, and his death is told in heroic terms. It is the last fight of a Christian warrior. His death-song is sung; he is received into the Burg of triumph. The scenery is well set and the Sun plays his part in the battle. Night too appears

with her shadow-helm to darken the battle-field. Night follows after night, each striding like a phantom over the sky. The Fiend and Guthlac meet one another like two heroes, armed for battle. Guthlac stands alone. Satan comes on him with many troops — "smiths of sin; roaring and raging, like wild beasts"; but the hill where this Holm-gang is set is Guthlac's field of victory. "His heart, his bones, were tortured," but his soul, full of joy, was ready for the Forth-going. The praise of God burnt in his breast; fiery hot was love in his heart, as the days stepped on and the cloud-helmings of the nights." When sickness came heavier on him, "the deadly drink that Eve had poured for Adam," death entered the lists — the warrior greedy of corpses; the stealthy bowman drew near to Guthlac in the shadow of the night. But he was not alone. His disciple asked him, "How is thine heart, my lord and father, shelter of thy friends, so sore oppressed! Knowst thou how this sickness will have an end?" "Death is near," answers Guthlac, — "the warrior who is not weary in the fight. Long do I tarry here" — and the whole passage is replete with the anchorite's tenderness and rapture. "Then the heavens grew dim over the children of men, dark strode the roll of nights above the clouds," and the day dawned on which Christ arose. Death was closer now; "stark, with thievish steps, he sought the house of the soul. Hot and near to Guthlac's heart the whirring arrow-storm, with showers of war, drove into his body. The cunning keys unlocked the treasure of his life." Then Guthlac gives his last message to his sister, and all the lines are steeped in that pathetic humanity which belongs in its fulness only to Cynewulf among Anglo-Saxon poets. I would the passage were not too long to translate.

After this he reveals to his disciple the secret of his converse with an angel who visits him between "the rushing of the dawn and the darkening of the night." "My soul," cries Guthlac, "is struggling forth to reach true joy." Then sank his head, but still, "high-minded, he drew his breath," and it was fragrant "as the blowing herbs in summer time, which — each in its own stead — winsome o'er the meadows, dropping honey, sweetly smell." With this lovely verse the poet, thrilled by the note that he has struck, is so uplifted that the impulse bears him onwards for a long time in a fuller flight, and the next sixty lines are some of the finest and the most sustained in the whole of Anglo-Saxon poetry. The sunset, the darkening of the night, the upleaping over the body of the saint of the heavenly pillar of light by which the shadows of

the darkness are quenched, the dawn, the death, the rapturous welcome of the saint in heaven, the voyage of the ship over the sea — are all touched with true fire, and burn with a steady light. They are, just because they are good, difficult to translate, but here they are —

1252. When the glorious gleam
Sought its setting-path, swart the North-sky grew,
Wan below the welkin; veiled the world with mist,
Thatched it thick with gloom! Over-thronged[1] the night,
Shrouded the land's lovelinesses! Then of Lights the greatest,
Holy, from the Heavens, came, shining high, serenely,
Bright above the burg-halls.[2]
He abode his end-day;
Blessed in his boldness, as it should befit him;
Stricken down by death-darts.
And the dazzling of that glory,
Noble round the noble one, all the night livelong,
Shone, bedecked with sheen; and the shadows dwindled,
Loosed and lost[3] below the Lift. Thus that Light illuming,
Shone, around the sacred house — candle of the sky it was —
From the Even-gloaming, till from Eastward came,
O'er the path profound, soft the murmur of the dawn:
Weather-token warm!
Then arose the glorious man,
Blessed, mindful to be brave! To his ministering thegn,
To his true companion spoke he, "Time is, that thou farest
And dost all-bethink thee of my errand now.
And with speed dost bring it, as I erst did bid thee,
Straight to my dear Sister; for my spirit now
Swiftly from my body hastens, sighing for the joys of God."
Then he heaved his hands on high, with the Housel fed,
Meekly with the food majestic; and his eyes he opened,
Holy jewels of his head; to the Heavenly kingdom gazed,
Glad of heart for graces, and his ghost sent forth,
Beautiful with blessed deeds, to the bliss of glory.
Then was led along Guthlac's soul on high
On the up-way! Angels bore it on
To that long delight; but his lych[4] grew cold
Soul-less under skies.
Then out-streamed a Light,
Brightest that of beaming pillars! All that Beacon fair,
All that heavenly glow round the holy home,
Was up-reared on high, even to the roof of Heaven,
From the field of earth, like a fiery tower,
Seen beneath the sky's expanse, sheenier than the sun,

[1] Night urged its way over the sky.
[2] This is the Pillar of Light afterwards more fully described.
[3] *To-lysan* = to dissolve. "Loosed and lost" expresses the process as well as the end of the dissolution, and this is the full meaning, I think, of the word.
[4] As the word *lich* for corpse is used in *Piers Plowman*, and in our *lych-gate*, I use it here for alliteration's sake.

Glory of the glorious stars! Hosts of angels sang
Loud the lay of Victory! In the lift the ringing sound
Now was heard the heaven under, rapture of the Holy Ones!
So the blessèd Burgstead was with blisses filled,
With the sweetest scents, and with skiey wonders,
With the angels' singing, to its innermost recesses;
Heirship of the Holy One![1]
More onelike it was,
And more winsome there, than in world of ours
Any speech may say; how the sound and odour,
How the clang celestial, and the saintly song
Heard in Heaven were — high-triumphant praise of God,
Rapture following rapture.[2]
All our island trembled,
All its Field-floor shook.

The messenger shook also with fear, drew forth his ship, and hastened to the sea-voyage I have already translated.[3] I think Cynewulf wrote these, and in the zenith of his power. The sorrow-laden disciple gives his message to Guthlac's sister, and while he is yet speaking, the poem breaks off suddenly, unfinished. Had we the rest of it, we should probably, as I have said, have some personal conclusion, in which Cynewulf would record his name in his usual runic fashion, and tell the tale of his state of mind. But for this we must wait in hope of some fresh manuscript, and meanwhile visit the *Andreas*.

The *Andreas* is in the Vercelli Book and extends to 1722 lines. Grimm was inclined to say that Ealdhelm was its writer. A number of critics following Dietrich attribute it to Cynewulf. Fritzsche's work upon it, while allotting it to an imitator of Cynewulf, has made it improbable that he was the writer, and this is now a common opinion. The poem certainly does not possess the special sentiment of Cynewulf, nor his habit of accumulating repetitions of the same thought in many different forms, nor his slow-moving manner broken by rushes of impulsive song, nor his satisfaction with a few incidents on which to work, and his apparent dislike to vary them. The *Andreas* is full of changing incidents, its movement is swift and following, its picture is filled with many images, and the writer does not repeat as much as usual in Anglo-Saxon poetry. There are no rapturous outbursts, and no personal joy or sorrow, one or other of which we look to find in a poem by Cynewulf. Nevertheless there are many phrases which put us in mind of Cynewulf, but then there are many which

[1] That is, heaven, the *yrfestôl*, the hereditary seat of the saints, therefore of this saint.
[2] "Breahtem aefter breahtme."
[3] Page 176.

put us in mind of *Beowulf*. The writer was probably, then, a follower of Cynewulf, some contemporary poet who had read the *Beowulf* and loved the early word-usages of his people. I think he lived, like Cynewulf, on the sea-coast, or perhaps, as a sailor, knew it well. His sea-voyage, in many curious phrases, suggests that he had been a sailor. There is even a personal touch, as I believe, in one passage, which speaks of his having been sixteen times on sea-journeys.[1]

The poem is full of original touches, and of curious interest. I have not read the *Acts of Andrew and Matthew*, Greek MSS. which are the sole source of the legend,[2] and do not know to what extent the poet used his original; but he probably worked with the usual freedom of the English poets, and the English note and air are fuller in the *Andreas* than in the *Elene* or the *Juliana*. It may be that this distinctive voice in the verse arose from the poet having only heard the story told to him by some monk who was still acquainted with Greek. He had nothing before his eyes to follow; he had only his memory to guide him. Hence his freedom!

The poem begins in the heroic strain, transferred to a Christian subject, "Lo, from days of yore we have heard of twelve heroes, famous under the stars, thegns of the Lord. The glory of their warfare failed not when the helms crashed in fight. Far-famed folk-leaders were they, bold on the war-path, when shield and hand guarded the helm upon the battle-field." In this easy fashion the story is brought on of Matthew, one of these heroes, waiting in prison to be devoured by the man-eating Mermedonians. His seizure is told in the strains of heathen war, with a full use of old heathen phrases. Matthew cries to God out of the prison, and God descends and departs home again, like a pagan Deity, but tells his servant that Andrew will come to deliver him. We now await the real hero of the piece. The first morning dawns. "The night-helm glode off, swiftly it vanished. Behind it came the light, the trumpet sound of the dawn." And the Mermedonians, wolves of slaughter, raged for the flesh of Matthew, but had three days yet to wait. It was then that the Lord appeared to Andrew, while he dwelt in Achaia, in a dream, and bade him go to Mermedonia. "There languishes thy brother in

[1] Mr. Gollancz restores the *Andreas* to Cynewulf. See the note at the end of this volume.

[2] They were discovered in the Royal Library at Paris, and in two of them the main details of the poem are found. There was probably a Latin translation of the legend in England.

victory. Go and deliver him." — "How can I, Lord," said Andrew, "make my voyage so swiftly over the paths of the deep? One of thine angels from the high Heaven might more easily do this. He knows the going of the seas, the salt streams, and the road of the swan; the onset of the billows, and the Water-Terror, but not I. The earls of Elsewhere are unknown to me, and the highways over the cold water."

"Alas, Andrew!" answered the Lord, "that thou should'st be so slow of heart to fare upon this way. Nathless, thou must go where the onset of war, through the heathen battle roar and the war-craft of heroes, is boded for thee. At early dawn, at the marge of the sea, thou shalt step on a keel, and across the cold water break o'er the bathway. No skulker in battle was Andrew, but hard and high-hearted, and eager for war. Wherefore at opening day he went over the sand-links and to the sea-stead, his thegns with him, trampling over the shingle. The ocean thundered, the billows beat the shore, the resplendent morning came, brightest of beacons, hastening over the deep sea, holy, out of the darkness. Heaven's candle shone upon the floods of sea."

This is all in the heroic manner, and more so than in any other Anglo-Saxon poem. Moreover, it is filled with the sea-air and the morning breaking on the deep. The very verse has the dash and salt of the waves in it, and the scenery is Northumbrian. No one can mistake it for that of an East Anglian or a Wessex shore.

Then, as Andrew stood on the beach, he was aware of three shipmasters sitting in a sea-boat, as they had just come over the sea, and these were Almighty God, and his angels twain, "clothed like ship-farers, when on the breast of the flood, they dance with their keels, far off upon the water cold."

"Whence come ye," said Andrew, "sailing in keels, sea-crafty men, in your water-rusher, lonely floaters o'er the wave? Whence has the ocean stream brought you over the tumbling of the billows?"

"We from Mermedonia are," replied Almighty God. "Our high-stemmed boat, our snell sea-horse, enwreathed with speed, bore us with the tide along the way of the whale, until we sought this people's land; much grieved by the sea, so sorely were we driven of the wind."

"Bring me there," said Andrew; "little gold can I give, but God will grant you meed." — "Strangers go not there," answered the Lord, standing in the ship; "dost thou wish to lose thy life?" — "Desire impels me," said Andrew, and he

is answered from the bow of the boat by God who is, like a sailor of to-day, "sitting on the bulwark above the incoming whirl of the wave," — and the extreme naïveté of the demand for payment, and the bargaining on the part of God, belong to the freshness of the morning of poetry; while the whole conversation supplies us with a clear picture of the manners and talk of travellers and seamen. We stand among the merchant carriers of the eighth century in England.

"Gladly and freely," the shipman says, "we will ferry thee over the fishes' bath when you have first paid your journey's fare, the scats appointed, so will the shipwards take you willingly on board." Then answered Andrew, sore in need of friends: "I have no beaten gold, nor silver store, nor lands, nor rings, to whet hereto your will." "How then," said the king, "would'st thou seek the sea-hills and the margin of the deep, over the chilly cliffs, to find a ship? Thou hast nothing for comfort on the street of sea; hard is his way of life and work who long makes trial of the paths of sea."[1] "It does not become thee," Andrew replies, "since the Lord has given thee wealth and good luck in the world to answer with biting speech and over-haughtiness. 'Tis better when a man modestly and couthly speaks to him who hastens to a far land. So Christ commanded — his thegns are we — chosen for his warriors. He bid us go over the bottomless abyss to woo souls to him, as far as the water bends around the world, or the hamlet-covered plains lie either side the streets of sea. He bid us take no treasure for the journey. Now mayst thou think how stands our voyage in thine eyes; soon shall I test what thou meanest for our consolation." "Yes," answers God, "if you are his thegns, I will take you." Then they stepped up on the keel, and over the swinging of the waves Andrew sat by the ocean-ward, Ætheling by Ætheling. "Never heard I," cries the poet, "that men, glorious kings and lovely thegns, sat in a comelier ship than that, laden with high treasures." And then the mighty king bade his angel comfort the poor men with food, that they might better bear their way over the welter of the flood, over the thronging of the billows, because now the whale-mere was vexed and mightily disturbed.

The storm is now described in words that come, one after another, short, heavy, and springing, like the blows of the waves, and the gusts of wind. We know as we read that the writer had seen the thing. I have translated it before; I have

[1] Cf. *Seafarer*.

need to translate it here again; but, for the sake of variety, I put it into blank verse, and literally —

370. The sword-fish played,
Through Ocean gliding, and the grey gull wheeled
Greedy of prey; dark grew the Weather-torch;
The winds waxed great, together crushed the waves,
The stream of ocean stirred, and drenched with spray
The cordage groaned; then Water-Terror rose
With all the might of armies from the deep.

And the thegns of Andrew were much afraid. But when the steersman offered to put them ashore, they refused, as in *Beowulf*, as in the *Fight at Maldon*, to leave their lord. "Whither can we go," they cry, "if we should leave our lord? In every land we should then be shamed before all folk, when the sons of men, for courage known, sit to choose who best of them has stood by his lord in war, when hand and shield upon the battle-plain, hewed down by grinding swords, bear sharp straits in the play of foes." Andrew, as chieftain, has also his duties to his comrades. The steersman bids him cheer and stir them with words; and he does this by telling them the story of Christ calming the sea of Galilee. It is a happy situation which the poet conceives, for Andrew, not knowing that Christ himself is seated beside him in the stern, tells Christ a story of Christ. "This Water-Terror shall be chid to stillness by the Lord of power."[1]

438. So happened it of yore, when we in ship
Steered for the sea-fords o'er the foaming bar,
Riding the waves; and the dread water-roads
Seemed full of danger, while the ocean-streams
Beat on the bulwarks; and the seas cried out,
Answering each other; and at whiles uprose
Grim Terror from the foaming breast of sea,
Over our wave-ship, into its deep lap.
And then the crowd
'Gan wail within the keel, and lo, the king,
The Glory-giver of the angels, rose
And stilled the billows and the weltering waves,
Rebuked the winds! Then sank the seas, and smooth
The might of waters lay. Our soul laughed out,
When we had seen beneath the welkin's path
The winds and waves and water-dread become
Fearful themselves for fear of God the Lord.
Wherefore in very sooth I tell you now
The living God will never leave unhelped
An earl on earth if courage fail him not.

[1] Whenever I translate in blank verse I have done the passage elsewhere more literally, and in a measure nearer to the Anglo-Saxon rhythm, of which blank verse is no representative.

Now sleep invades the thegns and the sea grew calm. But Andrew and the steersman, still awake, renew their talk. It is much more full of change and reality than is usual in Anglo-Saxon dialogue, and the characters of the speakers are also clearly distinguished. Christ and Andrew are seated together, but Andrew does not recognise his master, and when he is urged to tell what he remembers of Jesus, it is to Jesus himself that he tells all. This I have said is a good dramatic situation, and it is bettered by the vivid way in which the poet keeps the boat and the sea before our eyes. Touch after touch makes us aware that we are flying along the sea to deliver St. Matthew. Andrew's curiosity is awakened first by the skill of the steersman.

"A better seafarer I never met," he says. "Teach me the art whereby thou steerest the swimming of this horse of the sea, this wave-floater, foamed over by ocean. It was my hap to have been time after time on a sea-boat, sixteen times, pushing the deep, the streamings of Eagor, while froze my hands, and once more is this time — yet never have I seen a hero who like thee could steer o'er the stem. The sea-welter lingers on our sides, the foaming wave strikes the bulwark, the bark is at full speed. Foam-throated it fares; most like to a bird it glides o'er the ocean. More skilful art in any mariner I've never seen. It is as if the ship were standing still on a landstead where nor storm nor wind could move it, nor the water-floods shatter its foaming prow; but over seas it sweeps along, swift under sail. Yet thou art young, O refuge of warriors, not in winters old, and hast the answer of a sea-playing earl: and a wise wit as well."

"Oft it befalleth," answers Almighty God, "that we on ocean's path break o'er the bathway with our ocean-stallions; and whiles it happeneth wretchedly to us on the sea, but God's will is more than the flood's rage, and it is plain thou art his man, for the deep sea straightway knew and ocean's round, that thou hadst grace of the Holy Ghost. The surging waves went back, a fear stilled the deep-bosomed wave."

Andrew, hearing this, bursts into a song of praise and joy with which this part of the poem closes, for now the steersman changes the conversation; he asks Andrew to recall his life in Palestine with Jesus, — the same curious situation of Christ asking about himself is kept up, — and in these questions the teaching element in the Anglo-Saxon poems enters in. Poems were used as sermons, just as some homilies were written in rude verse. With this purpose the poet makes Andrew give a

brief account of the chief miracles, and ends with a touch of personal recollection and love, which lifts the passage into art. "Now hearest thou, young hero, how the Lord of Glory loved us in life, and by his teaching drew us to fair joys." Further questions follow, and the last seems to Andrew to go so much to the heart of the matter that he is amazed. "What dost thou ask," he cries, "with wonderful words and seemest to know every hap by the sharpness of thy spirit." — "Out of no lying craft or entrapping words," answers the steersman, "do I ask thee this — here on the path of the whale[1] — but because my heart is full of joy. Tell me more of the divine child." And Andrew is swept away by the passion of the steersman, and will tell him all he has known. In this way, and the whole dialogue is written by an artist, the strange legend is introduced of the stone images of the Cherubim[2] in the Temple being quickened by Christ, stepping down from their place and bearing witness to Jesus before the elders; and then being sent over the green plains of Judæa to call Abraham and Isaac and Jacob from their graves, to bid them be young again and to come to Jerusalem to bear witness to Christ. Thus all day long Andrew spoke in many tales till suddenly sleep overtook him. And Christ bade his angels bear this loved and sea-wearied one to land, where they leave him and his comrades sleeping on the highway, near the city of the Mermedonians.

And now begins what I may call the glory of St. Andrew, in which the half-epic battle of the "hero hard in war," — his purification through long martyrdom — is accomplished. It consists of four parts — the introduction, the delivery of St. Matthew, the martyrdom of Andrew, and the final triumph of the saint in the conversion of the Mermedonians.

The introduction paints the Apostle waking in the morning. He slept

835. Until the Lord had bid in brightness shine
Day's candle, and the shadows swooned away,
Wan under clouds; then came the Torch of air,
And Heaven's clear radiance blickered o'er the halls.
Then woke the hard in war, and saw wide plains
Before the burg-gates, and precipitous hills,
And, round the gray rock and the ledges steep,
Tile-glittering houses, towers standing high,
And wind-swept walls.

[1] This, and many other little touches keep our eyes fixed on the presence of the sea.

[2] I do not know whence this legend is derived.

Then Andrew awakened his comrades. "'Twas Christ the Ætheling," he says, "that led us across the realm of the oar." — "We too," they answer, "have had our adventure"; and this poet who has a special turn for various incident invents for them a dream in which they are brought into the heavenly Paradise.

862. "Us weary with the sea sleep overtook!
Then came great earns above the yeasty waves,
Swift in their flight and prideful of their plumes;
Who from us sleeping took away our souls,
And bore them blithely through the lift in flight,
With joyful clamour. Bright and gentle they
Caressed our souls with kindness, and they dwelt
In glory where eternal song was sweet,
And wheeled the firmament."

And there they saw the thegns of God, the patriarchs and martyrs and prophets, and the apostles and archangels praising the Lord. And Andrew gives thanks to Christ who now in form of a young Ætheling draws near. "Hail to thee, Andrew!" he cries, "the grim snare-smiths shall not o'erwhelm thy soul."

"How could I not know thee on the journey?" Andrew answers. "That was a sin."

"Not so great," replies Christ, "as when in Achaia thou saidst thou could not go over the battling of the waves. But now arise, set Matthew free. Bear many pains, for war is destined to thee. Let no grim spear-battle make thee turn from me. Be ever eager of glory. Remember what pains I bore when the rood was upreared. Then shalt thou turn many in this burgh to the light of Heaven."

Andrew, then, — and here begins the Delivery of St. Matthew — enters invisibly the town, like a chieftain going to the field of war. Seven watchmen keep the dungeon. As the saint drew near death swept them all away; hapless they died; the storm of death, beflecked with blood, seized on these warriors. The door fell in, and Andrew, the beast of battle, pressed in over the heathen who lay drunken with blood, ensanguining the death-plain. In that murder-coffer, under the locks of gloom, he found Matthew, the high-souled hero, singing the praises of God. They kissed and clipped each other. Holy and bright as heaven a light shone round about them, and their hearts welled with joys.

Now when Andrew had delivered Matthew, he went to the city and sat him down by a pillar of brass on the march-path,

full of pure love and thoughts of bliss eternal, and waited what should happen. And here begins the story of his suffering. The folk-moot is held, and the people demand the prisoners for meat. But the fierce bearers of the ashen-spears find the keepers dead, and the hammer-work unlocked. Fear of Hunger, that pale table-ghost, falls upon them, and the story of this cannibal crowd in an agony of famine is told with a grim humour which is very rare in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The first question is, Should they eat the dead guards of the prison? Then the burghers are called to council, and they come to the Thing-stead riding on their horses and haughty with their ash-shafts, and cast lots whom they shall devour. And the lot falls on an old redesman, who redeems his own life by offering his young son. Is it a touch of savage humour that they thankfully accept the change? And the youth sang his Harm-song, but no compassion held from him the "edge of the sword, hardened in the rain of blows, many coloured with fire-splotches." But Andrew has pity on the youth, and the edge of the sword becomes as wax and melts away. A rude, mocking description follows of the state of the town. "Howling of woe arose, the host burst into cries, the heralds shouted through the streets for famine. The hornèd halls, the wine-houses were empty, men enjoyed no welfare in that bitter tide; the wisest thinkers met to take rede of their wretchedness in secret runing; and one warrior said to another, "Let no one who has good lore hide it, for an immeasurable plague is on us." Whereat a devil steps up before the chiefs; wan and colourless he was and his hue that of a cursed one. "It is Andrew," he says, "a stranger Ætheling, who has done you this wrong. There he stands." Andrew replies with the usual vigour of the saints; and a curious passage follows in which the whole host, under its ensigns, with spears and shields, rushes to the gates to attack a single man. The scene is absurd, but after all it is the poet's way of heightening the aspect of the hero. To do this still more, God intervenes: "Andrew, thou shalt do a deed of valour; strengthen thy heart against the strong. Torments and cold bonds await thee, but I abide with thee." The saint is bound and dragged through mountain gorges and over stony hills, and over the streets, the ancient work of giants, paved with parti-coloured stones. So the whole day long was this sun-bright hero swinged, till the sun that blazed in the firmament sank to its seat of rest. Light was his thought and his courage unbroken.

Here follows an heroic picture in which the saint is set in a

frame made by the description of a bitter night of frost. This also is done to enhance him in our eyes. Nature is used to heighten the lonely figure of the martyr.

1255. Then was the Holy One, the stark-souled Earl,[1]
Beset with wisdom's thoughts the whole night long,
Under the dungeon gloom.
Snow bound the earth
With whirling flakes of winter, and the storms
With hard hail-showers grew chill, and Frost and Rime —
Gray gangers of the heath — locked closely up
The homes of heroes and the peoples' seats !
Frozen the lands ; and by keen icicles
The water's might was shrunken on the streams
Of every river, and the ice bridged o'er
The glittering Road of the sea.

Fresh torment filled the next day, and in answer to Andrew's piteous prayer for help, only the Fiend appears, the fierce warlock who cries to the torturers, "Smite the sinner over his mouth, the foe of the folk. Now he speaketh too much." And the martyrdom goes on till "the Sun gliding to his tent, went under a headland of clouds, and Night, wan and brown, drew down her helm o'er earth and veiled the mountains steep."

Then in the prison there was a wild scene. The murderous Lord of ill, with seven devils, came mocking, "What thinkest thou, Andrew, of thy hither-coming ?" And he urged on his thegns, "Let the spear-point, the arrow poison-dipped, dive into the heart of this doomed man ; run boldly in and bow the pride of this lord of battle." The rush of the devils is stopped by the Cross ; and the great captive of hell is grieved. "What has befallen you, my warriors bold, my shield-companions, that so little is your luck ?" Then one answered him, "Nought can we pain him. Go forward thyself. A bad, a frightful fight wilt thou have, if thou darest venture thy life against this lonely man. Dearest of Earls, we may give thee a better rede ; take care how it may go with thee in the changing of blows. Better to twit him in his wretchedness ; we have the words all ready." Then, at a distance, the devil mocked the saint, but the answer drove him to flight.

The third day dawned, another day of torment ; and at its end, while he lay weary of his life upon the plain, he cried piteously to Christ, "Thou, on the Cross, didst call, 'Father,

[1] This also I have translated before, and I put it, therefore, into blank verse.

Prince of life, why hast thou forsaken me'; and I, tormented for three days, now cry, 'Joy-giver of souls, let me yield up my life.' Moreover, thou didst promise that not a hair of our heads should be lost, nor sinew or bone lie on swathe; and now my locks lie driven through the land, my sinews are cramped, my blood is spilled — death is dearer than this life-care." — "Weep not," answers Christ, "thy wretchedness. This is not too hard for thee. Nothing of my word shall fail. Look on thy track where thy blood has gushed out." And the champion looked back, and lo, he saw blowing bowers rise, laden with blossoms, where he had poured out his blood! The fourth night now comes, and Christ is still present with his servant. The trial is closed, the triumph has begun. "No longer," Jesus cries, "shalt thou suffer sorrow." Then rose the hero, nor was his beauty now spoiled, nor a fringe of his garment unravelled, nor a hair of his head loosened. He was whole as before.

The fourth division, which tells of the glory of the saint, begins with a few personal remarks about the poet's treatment of his subject. The only thing in it which reveals character is a certain touch of proud humility, mingled with the self-consciousness of an artist. "I have already told of the saint's deeds, but far beyond my powers goes on the well-known history: a man of fuller insight than I may tell it all; yet I may give a few more words of the song." This is nothing more than an introduction to the new canto. There is none of that sentimental personality in it which, had Cynewulf written the poem, he would have certainly introduced, once he had begun, as the poet does here, to speak of himself. I cannot fancy the writer of the individual passages in the *Christ*, the *Elene*, and the *Juliana* holding his tongue under these circumstances. But it is just about as much personality as an imitator of Cynewulf would be likely to practise.

We find Andrew now, to return to the poem, on the plain near the city wall where two huge upright stones stand beaten by the storms, and these are the two tables of the Law. To one of them he speaks, and bids it let bubble forth from its base overflowing, wide-sweeping waters, a weltering ocean, for the death of these wicked men. The Stone behaved well; there was no delay; it opened, and a torrent flooded the plain. And the poet seizes his opportunity. A great flood, slaughtering men, is what an Englishman loved to describe. He does it well, but some of his metaphors are too fantastic for good art. I do not think that Cynewulf would have used them, but I

give them in a note[1] just because, from a literary point of view, they point to a poet who had left the quietude of Cynewulf behind, and was striving after odd and strange effects. The power shown is vigorous, but it is strained, and we may make the same criticism concerning the whole of this interesting and attractive poem. The constant use of phrases borrowed from *Beowulf*, from Cynewulf himself, the effort to be specially heroic in description, to import more of the heathen elements of Saga into a Christian song than even the *Elene* dared to do — the use of strange words, even the elaborate invention of words — point to a poet who was departing from a temperate style, and suggest, if they do not prove, that he wrote at a time when Cynewulf was growing old. If this be true, it puts us again in mind of the fantastic poets who imitated and followed the true Elizabethans, who retained much of the strength and imagination of the great time, but who chose to develop the artificial rather than the natural elements in the work of their predecessors. Yet the writer of the *Andreas* has one power Cynewulf had not, inventiveness in incident; and it was a thing sorely wanted in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Moreover, the fault I find with him had, I may say, only begun. It is not carried far, and had we more work from his hand, he would perhaps have purged himself from it when he had grown older. The fault is a fault of youth as well as of age. It belonged to Coleridge, to Byron, to Browning, to Tennyson, when they were young.

And now air and earth and fire join in the wrath which falls on the folk and the town. The yellow waters waxed more and more and men fled to the caves, but a mighty angel there forstood them, and sprinkled gleaming fire over the burg. The beating sea and torrents roared, the fire-flakes flew, the flood boiled with waves, and in the houses rose the lay of sorrow; many a death-song was sung. Through the tremulous air the roarings of the flame flung themselves upon the walls, and still the waters greater grew. And one cried out, "'Tis our unrightness to the stranger that brings this doom. Let us set him free." And Andrew knew the mind of the folk was changed; wherefore he bade the stream-faring be still, and

[1] The Stone "splits and the foaming billows cover the land, *as when the mead is spilled after a feast*. The fated sank in the deep; the war-charging of the waters swept them away. *This was a bitter beer-feast. No delay made the cup-bearers, the attendant thegns. From break of day there was drink enough prepared for every one of them.*" The whole of this comparison of the Flood to a drinking feast is detestable. Fortunately it stands alone. But it reveals the sensationalist who is searching for violent effects.

the storms rest about the stony hills. The earth dries under his feet. Then a fearful cavern is cleft in the hill and the fallow flood is engulfed, yet not the waters alone, but fourteen eminent villains therewith. This settled the strife, and all cry out "Hear Andrew, he is a messenger of the true God." So the apostle prayed, and all the young folk who had been drowned arose alive. They were baptized, and a church was built on the spot. The nobles and their wives were then christened, and a bishop chosen, Plato by name.

"Now I am going," cries Andrew, "to find a ship." So great is their sorrow that God speaks again to his servant. "Stay yet seven days in this city, Refuge of warriors" — even God takes the heroic note — "confirm them in the faith and then depart." So he did, and the poem ends with the picture of the departure, such as the poet might have drawn after reading Baeda's description of the departure of Ceolfrid from the shores of Tyne.

1712. Then by the Nesses of the sea they brought
The eager warrior to his wave-wood home,
And weeping after him, stood on the beach
As long as they could see that Æthelings' joy
Sail o'er the seals'-path, on the tumbling waves.
Then they gave glory to the glorious Lord,
Sang in their hosts, and this it was they sang —
"One only is the eternal God! Of all
Created beings is his might and power
Lauded aloud; and, over all, his Joy —
In high and holy splendour of the Heavens —
Shines through the everlasting ages far;
In glory beautiful for evermore
With angel hosts — our Ætheling, our King."[1]

Thus ends the *Andreas*, a poem full, I think, of attractive charm.

Connected with this poem by its imitation of heroic sagas, and by transference of their phrases to Christianity and its saints; and connected with Cynewulf by, at least, an imitation of his manner, is the *Descent into Hell* which is in the Exeter Book. This is but a fragment, but it has inspiration. Some have thought that it may have formed a portion of the *Christ* of Cynewulf. As it stands, I do not see that we can,

[1] I have put this last passage also into blank verse, though I have not translated it before, for it may serve, together with the others, to show how easy it is to put the short epic line of the English poets into that modern metre. But I am glad to abandon it, for it has not to my ear any more likeness to the real music of Anglo-Saxon verse than the stately march of gorgeous cavalry has to the gallop of a troop of guerillas.

without violence, insert it into the *Christ*. It has its own careful beginning, and were it not broken off, it would no doubt have had its careful end, for the fragment suggests a large and thoughtful composition. It is true it supplies a part of the history which is wanted in the *Christ*. But the story of the descent into Hades did not, it seems, any more than the Resurrection which is also left out, form a part of the plan of the *Christ*. The simplest and most probable conjecture is that this is a separate poem, the end of which we have lost, on this favourite subject. Wülker says, also, that there is no trace in the *Christ* of any use of the pseudo-gospel of Nicodemus, and that there are traces of its being used in this *Descent into Hell*. This would agree on the whole with Ten Brink's view that the poem was written some time after the *Christ*. During that time Cynewulf might have become acquainted with the gospel of Nicodemus.

There is no positive proof that Cynewulf was the author of this piece, but every one almost has felt that it belongs to him. It has all the manner of the first part of the *Christ*, the same trick of dialogue, the same choric outbursts, the same lofty note of poetic praise. There is a passage in which the poet apostrophises Gabriel, Mary, Jerusalem, and Jordan, which is almost parallel with a passage in the *Christ*, and of a kind which stands alone in Anglo-Saxon poetry. It has the very cry of Cynewulf in it. Nevertheless, I cannot think that the poem is contemporary with the *Christ*, but rather with that time in Cynewulf's life in which, wholly at peace about his salvation, he felt himself free to use elements introduced from heroic Saga in his poetry, as he has done in the *Elene*. Indeed, in this *Descent into Hell*, the imitation of the war-poem is more remarkable than in the *Elene*. The women who go to the tomb are Ætheling women. Christ's tomb and death are the tomb and death of an Ætheling. He is himself the joy of Æthelings. He is the victory child of God. The Patriarchs are noble. Even the soldiers are heroes. The women wail over the corse of Jesus as the English wailed over their Kings. John the Baptist is a great captain, and he welcomes Jesus into the Burg of Hell as a Norse captain would welcome his King in the hour of victory. The poem is full of triumphant passages. Here is one—

17. At the dawning of the day down a troop of angels came:
Stood the singing joy of hosts round the Saviour's burg.[1]
Open was the Earth-house, and the Ætheling's corse

[1] That is, round his tomb.

Took the sprite of life ! Shivered all the earth,
High rejoiced Hell's-burghers,[1] for the Hero had awakened,
Full of courage from the clay. Conquest-sure and wise,
Rose his glorious Majesty. Then the Hero, John,
Spoke exulting.

This is the full Saga note. It is even more remarkable when Christ sets forth on his expedition to hell and breaks down the gates of the burg. I have already used the passage —

33. On his war-path hastened then the Prince of men,
Then the Helm of Heaven willed the walls of Hell
To break down and bow to ruin, and the Burg unclothe
Of its sturdy starkness ; he, the strongest of all kings !
No helm-bearing heroes would he have for battle then ;
None of warriors wearing byrnies did he wish to lead
To the doors of Hell ! Down before him fell the bars,
Down the hinges dashed, inwards drove the King his way !

All the exiles throng to see him — Adam, Abraham, and the rest — the high-fathers of the world, hosts of noble women, uncounted multitudes. But of the great deeds done John the Baptist saw the most. He beheld "how the gates of hell, that darkness had garmented so long, gleamed in the glory of Christ's coming; and when he saw it, the great Thegn rejoiced. Greeting, he welcomed the King," and his long speech takes up the rest of this fragment, and breaks off in the midst. It is of an excellent quality, written, I think, to be sung, at least in parts, as a choric hymn. The whole poem is worth a separate study by some careful scholar.

Of the same fine quality, but not built in an heroic mould, is the *Phœnix*, which we may, and with much more certainty, allot to Cynewulf. It is the last of the longer poems, and when we have gone through it, there is nothing left, save the *Dream of the Rood*, of any literary importance. The *Phœnix* is in the Exeter Book and runs to 677 lines. Its source is a Latin poem on the same subject attributed to Lactantius, and the Latin lines are printed under the Anglo-Saxon text by Thorpe in his edition of the Exeter Book. The writer leaves his original at verse 380 and composes the story of the *Phœnix* into a Christian allegory of the Resurrection. This is the second part, and he has used in it the writings of Ambrose and Baeda. As long as he draws on the so-called Lactantius poem he follows it, in Cynewulf's fashion, sometimes expand-

[1] The burghers of hell here are the Old Testament saints, the "spirits in prison."

ing, sometimes shortening the sense. The expansions are chiefly when he is describing natural scenery, and when he is breaking into praise. In the second part the outbursts of laud and honour to God are entirely in Cynewulf's exulting manner, and the description of the Last Judgment closely resembles the descriptions of the same event in the *Christ* and the *Elene*. There are but few of the critics who do not believe in Cynewulf's authorship of this poem. If it be so, all the probabilities go to prove that the poem was written by him after the *Christ* and before the *Elene*.

I have said that the introduction of a strong personal element is the special mark of all the signed poems of Cynewulf, and that the signature is fancifully added to the personal statement. There is no distinct personal element in the *Phœnix*, unless we say that he adopts as his own the quotation he makes from Job "concerning the Resurrection to eternal life," and which he introduces with the words, "Let no man think that I sing this song with lying words; hear now what the wisdom of Job sang." Nor is there any signature, but there is an ending of another kind which Cynewulf, in his fantastic way, may have inserted in place of his runes. The last eleven lines are a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Latin. The first half of each line is Anglo-Saxon, the last half Latin, and the Latin is alliterated with the Anglo-Saxon.

The poem begins with that description of the paradisaical land where the Phœnix dwells which I have translated (page 213). The second canto describes the Phœnix and its life. The bird lives alone a delightful life in his happy isle. Death never harms him in that land of joy.

90. He shall of the Sun see and watch the voyaging,
And shall come right on 'gainst the candle of the Lord,
'Gainst the gladdening gem! He shall gaze with eagerness
When upriseth clear that most Ætheling of stars,
O'er the Ocean wave, from the East a-glitter,[1]
Gleaming with his glories, God the Father's work of old,
Beacon bright of God!— Blind the stars shall be,
Wandered under waters to the western realms,
All bedimmed at dawn, when the dark of night,
Wan, away has gone. Then, o'er waves, the Bird,
Firm and feather-proud, o'er the flowing ocean stream,
Under lift and over Lake, looketh eager-hearted
When upcometh fair, from the East a-gliding
O'er the spacious sea, the upshining of the Sun.

[1] These lines are, with changes, repeated below. These descriptive passages have, owing to their frequent refrains either of motive or description, something of a lyric strain.

The next lines repeat the same motive over again in other words; and as this is one of the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and a special characteristic of Cynewulf who manages it with skill, I insert them here. Repetitions of this kind were not wearying when they were sung, and I believe that when they were deliberately made, as here, for the heightening of the impression, they were perhaps set to different music or to the same music in a different key.

104. So the fair-born fowl at the fountain-head,
At the well-streams, wonneth in a winsomeness unfailing!
There a twelve of times, he, the joy-triumphant one,
In the burn doth bathe him, ere the beacon cometh,
Candle of the Æther; and, as often, he
Of those softly-joyous springings of the Wells
Tastes at every bath — billow-cold they are! —
Then he soars on high, when his swimming-play is done,
With uplifted heart on a lofty tree —
Whence across the Eastern paths, with an ease the greatest,
He may watch the Sun's outwending, when that Welkin-taper
O'er the battle of the billows brilliantly is blickering,
Flaming light of light! All the land is fair-adorned;
Lovely grows the world when the gem of glory,
O'er the going of great Ocean, glitters on the ground,
Over all the middle-earth — mightiest this of stars!

This is the repetition, and very well done it is. Then Cynewulf describes the life of the Bird till evening falls, and I wonder that there are still folk who think that there is no poetry in early England. I translate, as before, literally —

120. Soon as ere the Sun, o'er the salt sea-streamings,
Towers up on high, then the gray and golden fowl
Flieth forth, fair-shining, from the forest tree;
Fareth, snell of feathers, in its flight along the lift;
Sounds, and sings his way (ever) sunwards on.

Then as beautiful becomes all the bearing of the bird;
Borne his breast is upwards in a blissfulness of joy!
In his song-craft he makes changes, in his lucid voicing,
Far more wonderfully now than did ever bairn of man
Hear, the Heavens below; since the High-exalted King,
He the Worker of all glory, did the world establish,
Earth, and eke the Heaven.
The up-ringing of his voice
Than all other song-crafts sweeter is and lovelier;
Far away more winsome than whatever winding lay.
Not alike to that clear sound may the clarion be,
Nor the horn nor harp-clang, nor the heroes' singing —

Not of one of them on earth — nor the organ tone,
Nor the singing of the sackbut, nor sweet feathers of the swan,
None of all the other joys that the Eternal shaped
For the mirthfulness of men in this mournful world.
So he sings and softly sounds, sweetly blessed in joy,
Till within the southern sky doth the Sun become
Sunken to its setting — silent then is he.
Listening now he lends his ear, then uplifts his head,
Courage-thrilled and wise in thought! Thrice he shaketh then
Feathers whet for flight — so the fowl is still.

Thus lives the Phœnix for a thousand years; then, attended by troops of birds, flies far to the Syrian land, where in a desert place, on a high tree, he makes his nest for death.

182. Then the wind is still and the weather fair;
Pure and holy there shines the Heaven's gem;
Clouds are cleared away, and the glorious crowds of waters
Still are standing there; every storm therein
Under Heaven is hushed.

In this sweet weather the Phœnix builds his nest of noble plants and odorous leaves; and when at summer-time the sun is brightest, the home of the bird is heated and the fang of fire devours bird and nest; but the ashes, balled together, grow into an apple, and in the apple a wondrous worm waxes till it becomes an eagle, and then a Phœnix as before. Only honey-dew he eats that falls at midnight, and when he has gathered all the relics of his old body and covered them with sweet herbs, he takes them in his claws and, flying back to his native land, buries them deep in its earth. All men, all the birds, flock to see his flight, but he outstrips their sight, and comes alone to his happy isle, where once more he "dwells in the grove, delighting in the welling streams."

When Cynewulf has thus brought his bird back, he makes out of its story two allegories, one of the life of the Saints, and another of Christ who, after the Judgment, flies through the air attended by all the worshipping souls like birds; and each soul becomes a Phœnix, and dwells for ever young where joy never changes, praising God in the burg of life. Then again he makes Christ the Phœnix who passed through the fire of death to glorious life, "Therefore to him be praise for ever and ever. Hallelujah."

This allegorical treatment of the life of beasts and birds, and also of the great tales of the world; the taking up of the whole of natural history into the realm of the spiritual —

human thoughts and emotions being imputed to the animals; — is of great antiquity, and especially among Semitic peoples. Through the Old Testament, through the Talmud, through the parables of Christ, it descended to the early Christian writers and was increased among them by their contact with Syria, Arabia, and India; but the taste for it may be said to have been established by the Fathers of the Church. Ambrose, for example, uses the Phœnix as the symbol of the Resurrection. It was common in the eighth century, the time of which we are writing, and it steadily grew during the Middle Ages among poets and preachers till it was carried to an extreme height. In the catalogue, for example, of Duke Humphrey's library we find the whole of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* moralised in this allegorical fashion. This is not the place to discuss so large and fruitful a subject, but the allegorical treatment of the Phœnix by Cynewulf leads me to place here three other English poems — the *Whale*, the *Panther*, and the *Partridge*, — which are either intended to be a complete *Physiologus* by their writer, or may be parts of a much more extended collection.

A *Physiologus* was a collection of descriptions of certain Beasts, Birds, and Fishes, and of the legends connected with them, with a religious allegory tacked on to them. The earliest *Physiologus* was in Greek, and from it the Æthiopian as well as the Latin *Physiologus* were translated. This Latin one, it is conjectured, was the source of the three Anglo-Saxon poems we possess, and also of two manuscripts of the ninth century (*B* and *C*), discovered by Cahier, which agree for the most part with one another. In *B*, after twenty-two other animals, the Panther, the Whale, and the Partridge follow one another. In *C* the Panther precedes the Whale, and the Partridge is left out. In the ancient Greek *Physiologus* also the Panther comes first of the three, and the Whale and the Partridge follow. It is suggested by critics that the Anglo-Saxon writer chose these three concluding animals, not at random, but with the intention of making out of them — since each of them represents one of the three kingdoms — a short but complete *Physiologus*. At the close of the poem of the *Partridge*, *Finit* stands in the manuscript. The *Partridge* is a mere fragment, but the *Panther* and the *Whale* are complete, and have some literary interest.

In far lands, in deep hollows lives the Panther, glittering in a coat as vari-coloured as Joseph's, lonely, gentle, harmless to all, save to the dragon, that envenomed scather. When he has

fed, he seeks a hidden place among the mountain dells and slumbers for three nights. On the third day, when he wakes, a lofty, sweet, ringing sound comes from his mouth, and with the song a most delightful steam of sweet-smelling breath, more grateful than all the blooms of herbs and blossoms of the trees. Then from the burgs, and from the seats of kings, and from castle halls, pour forth the troops of war-men and the swift lance-brandishers, and all the animals, to hear the song and meet the perfume. So is the Lord God, the Prince of Joys, and so the hope of salvation which he gives. That is a noble fragrance.

The *Whale*, since it has to do with the sea, is more wrought out by the poet, and more interesting than the *Panther*. The first part of the legend — of the sailors landing on the monster's back as on an island — comes perhaps originally from the East. It is in the story of Sinbad the Sailor, but it continued for a long time in English literature, through Middle English to Chaucer, and so on to Milton's simile. Our description here is the first English use of the tale. It is fairly done, and filled in with special sea-phrases. I will tell, he says, of the mickle whale whose name is

7. Floater of the Flood-streams old, Fastitocalon.
Like it is in aspect to the unhewn stone,
Such as movèd is at the margent of the sea,
By sand-hills surrounded, thickly set with sea-weeds;
So that the surge-sailors ween (their souls within),
That upon some island with their eyes they look.
Then they hawser fast their high-stemmèd ships
With the anchored cables on the No-land there;
Moor their mares of ocean at this margin of the main!
. . . . Thus the keels are standing
Close beside that stead, surged around by ocean's-stream.[1]

[1] Compare Milton —

Or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream.
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind,
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays.
So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay,
Chained on the burning lake.

It is a whole lesson in art to contrast this with its predecessor of the eighth century. "Ocean-stream" is pure Anglo-Saxon for sea. "Thickly set with sea-weeds" is literally "greatest of sea-weeds or sea reeds." I take it to mean that the stone looks as if it were itself the very greatest of sea-weeds, so thickly is it covered with them.

The players of the sea climb on the island, waken a fire, and are joyous, but suddenly the Ocean-guest plunges down with the bark, and in the hall of death makes fast with drowning ship and seamen. So plays the Fiend with the souls of men. Yet another fashion has this proud Rusher through the water. When he is hungry this Ocean-ward opens his wide lips, and so winsome an odour pours forth that the other fishes stream into his mouth till it is filled;[1] then quick together crash the grim gums around his prey. So too it is with men and the accursed one. When life is over, he claps his fierce jaws, the gates of hell, behind them. This is the common image of the entrance of hell — as seen, for example, in the rude pictures of the Caedmon manuscript, — like the gaping mouth of a monstrous fish.

I think it probable that these three small poems, which a literary connection has led me to link on to the *Phœnix*, were collected together if not actually made at York during the time when its great school was flourishing. The history of that School will form the following and the last chapter of this book. It was in full career during the whole time in which we suppose Cynewulf was writing; and though I do not think that he wrote in that town, yet what he wrote was read, we may be sure, at that central seat of Northumbrian learning. Among all the Latin studies pursued there, it is not likely that English would altogether be neglected. A few scholars at least — and we know that Baeda did so — would care for the native poetry of their own country, study it, and collect it. The seats of great libraries become the home of literary collections. I conjecture, then, that during the fifty years or so when the School of York was famous over England and on the Continent, the English poetry of the past, the lays of Beowulf, the war-songs, the songs of Caedmon and many others, were gathered at York, studied, and arranged. It is likely enough that the Christian editing of *Beowulf*, and of semi-heathen poems like the *Wanderer* and the *Seafarer*, was done in the cloistered shades of the great School.

It is still more likely that the class of poems of which I now briefly write — collections of proverbial folk-sayings, senten-

[1] I wonder if the ancient sailors had ever met the sperm-whale, for this part of the legend contains things true both of it and of the Greenland whale. When the sperm-whale dies of the disease which produces Ambergris, it leaves behind it, lingering on the ocean, a sweet scent. The Right whale feeds on small animalculæ, which the whalers call *Brit*. It takes in with open mouth the sea thick with these small beasts, and then closing its gates of whale-bone ejects the water. The *Brit* are retained behind the fence of bone.

tious moral poems containing selected passages from the old or the new poetry put together within a framework of the collector's own writing — were made at York during the literary leisure of the time, and received and heard with pleasure by Ecgberht, Æthelberht, and Alcuin. However that may be, it is under this convenient and probable supposition that I place the *Gnomic Verses*, the *Crafts or Gifts of Men*, and the *Weirds of Men*, all of which are contained in the Exeter Book.

The *Gnomic Verses* are in four parts, three of which are in the Exeter Book, and the fourth is in the Cotton MS. at Cambridge. They consist of folk-proverbs, maxims, short descriptions of human life and natural occurrences, thrown together without any apparent arrangement in subjects. They vary in length from half a line to six or eight lines. Some are of the plainest simplicity, others show some knowledge of the world; some are quotations from the poets; there is one at the eighty-first line which is taken from *Beowulf*, 1387; there are two others which seem to be extracted from the *Seafarer*. Some of them relate to natural phenomena, some to the life of animals, many to the customs and manners of men and women; some may have come down from heathen times and be very old,[1] others have been Christianised; others, as plainly, have had their origin when Christianity had been well established; and some belong, I think, to a time long after the eighth century. I think it probable that the original collector was some literary person at York, during Ecgberht's or Æthelberht's time, who was interested in heathen verse and customs. The lines from *Beowulf* suggest this, and the resemblances to the *Seafarer* suggest that the collector was a Northumbrian. Then we may imagine that the collection, brought southward to Wessex, was taken up again after the days of Ælfred, new matter added, the introduction of the first part written, the close of the first, second, and third. The last line, for example, of the first part is the wish of the editor to be thanked by his readers for the trouble he has taken, "Let him have thanks who got together for us these pleasures." The last four lines of the third part do not appear to me to belong to the lines which precede them, but to be an ancient folk-saying concerning weapons. I conjecture, then, that they formed part of the

[1] These are of special interest. It is not improbable (and this has been frequently said) that we have in some of them old folk-verses which the English used in the old England over the sea, and that they are specimens of the earliest form of English verse. I have inserted a few of them into a note at the end of this volume.

body of the manuscript which the scribe was copying, and that, finding he had omitted them as he wrote, he tagged them on at the end. I give them here —

> Yare be the Warboard and lance-head on shaft,
> Edge on the sword and point on the spear,
> Brave heart in warriors; a helm for the keen,
> And the smallest of hoards to the coward in soul.

That has the heroic heathen ring. It belongs to the other phrases in earlier parts of the *Verses* which treat of weapons of war, such as "The bow must have its arrow."

Two other poems, somewhat related to each other in subject, may also have been edited at the School of York. They are writings which, in their contemplative view of human life, would naturally attract the attention of retired and pensive scholars, men like Gray, who looked from their college windows on the vicissitudes of human affairs and turned them into reflective odes. These are the *Gifts of Men* and the *Fates of Men*. They have both, without any sufficient proof, been allotted to Cynewulf. They have also been made into two separate treatments by the same poet of one subject. Whoever wrote, says Rieger, the *Gifts of Men*, wrote also the *Weirds of Men*. Our gifts are often our fates. But few support Rieger in this, and Wülker maintains that the art in both poems is different, and the poets different, and that Cynewulf had nothing to do with either.

The chief interest of the *Gifts of Men* is that some of it may have come down from heathen times. The introduction plainly belongs to a Christian editor, and so does the close; and it borrows its main theme either from Gregory's homily on Job or from St. Paul's enumeration of the Gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians xii., "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit." Half of the gifts are profane enough — harp-playing, knowledge of the stars, building, running, archery, steering the war-ship through the sea, smithery of war-weapons, the goldsmith's craft, companionship in the mead-hall, skill in dice, in riding, in hunting, in drinking, in giving dooms in council when wise men make national laws, in hawking, in juggling. It is probable there was a heathen or semi-heathen poem on the gifts of men which both Cynewulf in the *Christ* and the writer of this poem had before them, and that this writer mingled it up with a free adaptation of Gregory's homily, of the xii. of 1 Corinthians, and perhaps of some Latin hymn on the same matter. There is no poetic or liter-

ary quality in this catalogue of gifts, or in the reflections on them.

A different air breathes through the poem on the *Weirds of Men*. It has some form; the introduction of the poem is brief and excellent; the different fates of men are touched with a poet's hand. It is a strange criticism which imagines that he who composed this could have composed the *Gifts of Men*. It belongs to the good time, and I should not be surprised if it were written within the first three decades of the eighth century, and perhaps by Cynewulf in his semi-heathen, semi-Christian time. There is a manner of painting human life in it which recalls some of the *Riddles*. But this is mere conjecture. It begins with the birth of a child, its growth, its education by its parents. "God only knows," it says, "what the winters will bring to the grown-up man," — and then it enumerates the different kinds of miserable deaths which may befall him — death by the wolf, "the gray ganger of the heath," death by hunger, from blindness, in war, by lameness, by falling from a tree, by the gallows, by fire, by quarrel at the feast; misery through exile and loss of friends, and poverty. But others, by the might of God, will win through all misfortune to a hoar old age, happy and prosperous, and with troops of friends, — so manifold are the dooms God gives to men. Then he seems to slip into a telling of the gifts rather than of the fates of men — and we have done over again, only done by a poet, all that we have read of in the previous poem, — the gifts of the warrior, the learned man, the boon-companion, the harper, the falcon-trainer, and the goldsmith who adorns with his art the man of the Britons' king (*bryten-cyninges beorn*) a phrase which may help us to approach the date of the poem.

As I have already used the most vigorous of the pictures of English life contained in these poems in the chapters on the Settlement and War in Poetry, I may, with this short sketch, leave the poem behind me,[1] and with it all the poetry which preceded Ælfred, except the *Dream of the Rood*. Other verses, it is true, on various subjects, lie scattered through the Exeter Book, and through the manuscripts in various libraries. But they do not belong to this time, or might have been writ-

[1] There are two other poems in the Exeter Book which have been somewhat mixed up with these — one *On the Spirit of Men* ("Bi manna mode"), and the other *On the Leasing of Men* ("Bi manna lease"). They have no literary value whatever. They are nothing more than fragments of sermons in verse, and may have been written at any time. The first is on the glory of humility and the baseness of pride, and the second is built on Psalm xxviii.

ten at any time, and I may say by any monk, from the seventh to the eleventh centuries. They belong to the next volume of this book, and we turn, to end this long tale of our earliest poetry, to the *Dream of the Rood*, the last, as it seems to me, of the important poems of the eighth century.

One portion of this poem has been already discussed — the personal epilogue with which it closes. I have taken it to be the last thing that Cynewulf wrote, and that it tells the tale of his last days. It speaks his farewell to life, and seems to sing the dirge of Northumbrian poetry. I place it here as the epilogue to this history of Early English song. I believe the position I give it to be historical, but I do not assert it to be historical. It is not possible to say with any certainty that its date falls within the last ten or twenty years of the eighth century, or that it was even written by Cynewulf. A great debate clashes round its authorship. A large number of German and English scholars assert that Cynewulf was its writer, but they have somewhat lessened the weight of their opinion by fastening also on him many inferior poems which have nothing of the artist in them from head to tail. Wülker, with others, seems to think it most improbable, if not impossible, that Cynewulf wrote the poem, and goes so far as to include the discussion of it among the poems he classifies under the name of Caedmon.[1] Some have attributed it to Caedmon himself, partly backing their opinion by the supposed translation of the runic title on the Ruthwell Cross — *Caedmon me fawed* ("Caedmon made me"), and connecting this with the lines carved on the Cross, which are almost identical with lines contained in this *Dream of the Rood*. But the lines may have been carved in the tenth century, and the assertion that "Caedmon made me" be no more than the carver's opinion, or even the name of the carver. No certainty can be gained on that path.

A much stronger argument against Cynewulf's authorship arises, I think, from the metre of the poem; and the argument is stronger against my own view that it was the last of the poems of Cynewulf, than it would be against those who think it to be one of his earliest poems. Almost the whole of the story of the dream is written in the long-epic and Caedmonian line, and though Cynewulf does use this line now and then in his signed poems, he uses it with great rarity, and never in any continuous narration. He does not use it at all in the

[1] He has collected the reasons as yet given for or against the authorship of Cynewulf, in his *Grundriss*, at pp. 189–196.

Elene which is his last signed poem; and it is certainly very much against my opinion that the *Elene* preceded the *Dream of the Rood* that Cynewulf, having fixed himself down in the *Elene* to the short-epic line, should break loose from it, and use in the *Dream* that solemn but various, dignified but rushing long-epic line which is found in the *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Judith*, in the earlier German poems, such as *Muspilli* and the *Hildbrand Lay*, and in Icelandic lays, such as those of *Atli* and *Harbard*. I might say that Cynewulf was acquainted with the line; that he uses it now and then in the *Christ* and in *Guthlac*, and that there is no reason why he should not use it again, at the close of his life, if he liked it, and for a special purpose, especially as the use of it continued after his death in England,[1] Germany, and Iceland, along with that of the short-epic line; but I must confess that the more I have read the *Dream of the Rood* the more I have been impressed with the feeling — arising from the archaic sentiment as well as from the long-lined metre of the dream-part of the poem — that this portion at least is older than Cynewulf and does belong to the Caedmonian School. But I have been equally impressed with the extreme unlikeness of the closing part of the poem to the dream-part, and its extreme likeness to the work of Cynewulf and to the way in which he thought and felt. The introduction also is in Cynewulf's veritable manner, and both the introduction and the close are written in the short-epic line. The narration of the dream itself is with one exception in the long line, and stands between the short-lined beginning and end like the ancient centre and keep of a mediæval castle, now turned into a country house and flanked by two wings built in the Tudor period. The conjecture then has occurred to me that there was an older poem describing the crucifixion of Jesus which may possibly have been written by Caedmon or one of his school, and which Cynewulf took up and worked at in his own fashion, adding to it where and how he pleased, and changing its mode of presentation — making it, for instance, into a dream, and adding the personification of the Tree. Not only are the introduction and the conclusion in his own metre, but also the description which the Tree gives of itself as living once on the edge of the wood before its enemies cut it down. The conjecture may be thought too bold, but it accounts for the double metre of the poem; it does away with the strongest argument against Cynewulf's authorship;

[1] In England, *if Genesis B* was written, as they say, in or about Ælfred's time.

it gets rid of the difficulty of the want of unity of feeling which exists between the dream and the rest on the supposition of both being by the same writer; and it leaves to Cynewulf a number of passages which are steeped in his peculiar personality, and which it would be extremely hazardous to allot to any one else but himself.[1] It is true he has not signed the poem, and it is said that, as he had imitators, he would have signed it if he had written it, and that he has signed four poems. But a man is not bound always to sign his poems, even though it be his custom. We do not know that he signed the *Guthlac*, but we believe he wrote it. The question of the quasi-signature of the *Riddles* in the supposed charade of Riddle I. is still doubtful, but we allot to him the greater part of the *Riddles*. The *Phœnix* which every one gives to him is not signed; and if this *Dream* was written, as I think, quite at the close of his life, it is not improbable that he saw no need to sign it, or never thought of signing it. I cannot see that his not signing it is any convincing evidence that it is not his, if the probabilities of his authorship are great.

And they are great. The introduction is, with the exception of a few lines which I refer to the older poem, entirely in his manner. The personal cry, "I, stained with sins, wounded with my guilt," is almost a quotation from his phrases in the *Elene* and *Juliana*. Then the impersonation of the Tree, the account of its life in the wood, is exceedingly like the beginning and the manner of some of the *Riddles;* and the vivid fashion in which it is conceived as sorrowing and trembling, as full of hate and love, as wounded like a warrior with shafts, recalls the work and belongs to the imagination of him who conceived the personality of the Sword and the Bow and the Loom. Moreover, the personal, subjective element which is found in his signed poems and which no other Anglo-Saxon poet possesses, is greater in the latter part of this poem than it is in any of his signed works. It is also of the same kind as it is in the *Christ*, the *Juliana*, and the *Elene*, and sounds a similar note. There are also similarities of expression, but these have not much value, for there are also differences of expression. Lastly, the worship paid in the poem to the Cross

[1] A re-making of this kind is quite in accordance, I think, with Anglo-Saxon custom. The *Azarias* in the Exeter Book is an instance, I believe, of the same thing. It is a portion of the *Daniel* taken out, and worked up afterwards by another poet. Nor did the custom die. Chaucer and Shakspere practised it. It is in fact common to all ages of poetry, except perhaps to a time like our own, when the plagiarism-hunters have spoiled this interesting and pleasant practice.

and the glorification of it is a constant element in two of his genuine poems. He speaks in the *Christ* of the Rood in much the same manner as he does here. He speaks in the *Elene* of the "Tree of glory which he had always in mind" before he wrote of its discovery by Helena. We understand from the *Elene* that his change from remorse to spiritual happiness was bound up with the light-bringing office or appearance of the Cross.[1] All these things are explained if we see in the *Dream* a personal statement of Cynewulf in which he deliberately refers to having seen long ago a Vision of the Cross, and the story of which he now tells on the verge of the grave. It is said that he would not have repeated in his last days so much of what he said in the *Elene*. Why should he not repeat himself in another form? It is a common habit of the poets; it is a characteristic of old age; and recapitulation is, moreover, a mark of Cynewulf's work. To say that it is not natural or probable that an old man, as he waits for death, would tell over again the story of what happened long ago when first he knew his Saviour, is not true. It is both probable and natural that he would enshrine at the last, by means of his special art, the most important moment of his life, and leave it as a legacy to his few friends of whom he speaks so tenderly. These are the reasons for my belief that the poem is by Cynewulf, and his last work.

"Lo," it begins —

> Listen — of all dreams I'll the dearest tell,
> That at mid of night met me (while I slept),
> When word-speaking folk wonnèd in their rest.
> I methought I saw led into the lift,

[1] Too much must not, however, be made of this, for the English Christians of this time seem to have worshipped the Cross as much as the Spaniards; and I daresay the common worship was increased, as I think the Constantine and Helena story became a favourite, by the remembrance of Oswald's planting of the Cross in the sight of his warriors before the battle of Heavenfield. Lingard quotes the words which Alcuin puts into Oswald's mouth —

> Prosternite vestros
> Vultus ante crucem, quam vertice montis in isto
> Erexi, rutilat Christi quae clara trophaeo,
> Quae quoque nunc nobis praestabit ab hoste triumphum.
> Alcuin, *De Pont. Ebor.*

Ceolfrid, leaving Wearmouth, "adorat crucem." "Tuam crucem adoramus," prays Alcuin. Ealdhelm and others were accustomed to call themselves "crucicolae." The Cross stood in their minds for Him who died thereon. Cynewulf's special worship for the Cross is not then remarkable — yet it is. We do not find the same special direction of poetry anywhere else among the verse of the earlier English.

All enwreathed with light, wonderful, a Tree,
Brightest it of trees! All that beacon was
Over-gushed with gold; jewels were in it;
At its foot were four,[1] five were also there
High upon the axle-span, and beheld it there, all the angels of the Lord[2]
Winsome for the world to come! Surely that was not, of a wicked man the gallows.
But the spirits of the saints saw it (shining) there,
And the men who walk the mould and this mighty Universe.
Strange that stem of Victory was! Then I, spotted o'er with sins,
Wounded with my woeful guilts, saw the Wood of glory
All with joys a-shining, all adorned with weeds,
Gyred with gold around. Gems had worthily
Wandered in a wreath round this woodland Tree.

Nathless could I through the gold come to understand
How the sufferers strove of old[3] — since it now began
Blood to sweat on its right side. I was all with sorrows vexed
Fearful then I was, 'fore that vision fair, for I saw that fleet fire-beacon
Change in clothing and in colour! Now it was with wet beclouded,
Now with running blood was red, then again enriched with gems.
Long the time I lay, lying where I was,[4]
Looking, heavy-hearted, on the Healer's Tree —
Till at last I heard how it loudly cried.
These the words the best of woods now began to speak —
"Long ago it was, yet I ever think of it,
How that I was hewèd down where the holt had end!
From my stock I was dissevered; strong the foes that seized me there;
Made of me a mocking-stage, bade me lift their men outlawed.[5]
So the men on shoulders moved me till upon a mount they set me;
Many were the foemen who did fix me there —
Then I saw the Lord, Lord of Folk-kin He,
Hastening march with mickle power since He would upmount on me."

"But I — I dared not, against my Lord's word, bow myself or burst asunder, though I saw all regions of earth trembling; I might have felled his foes, but I stood fast."

[1] "Four jewels were at the edges of the earth."

[2] This line and the following — in the long metre — belong, I think, to the original poem which I conjecture Cynewulf was working on.

[3] "The long-past battle of the sufferers," *i.e.* of the Tree and of Him it bore.

[4] Here Cynewulf, as I think, having used with personal modifications the long lines of the ancient poem, takes up his own work for a time.

[5] *Waefer-syne* = a scene, a spectacle, a theatre. The Cross is as it were a stage on which the punishment and guilt of the criminal is displayed. Grein translates, "bade their slaves lift me up," but I think that the translation in the text is the most natural. It makes the Wood state simply, and at first, the shameful uses to which it was put.

Then the Hero young, armed Himself for war and Almighty God He was;
Strong and staid of mood stepped He on the gallows high,
Brave of soul in sight of many, for He would set free mankind.
Then I shivered there — when the Champion clipped me round;
But I dared not then, cringe me to the earth.[1] l. 39.

"A Rood was I upreared, rich the King I lifted up, Lord of all the heavens, yet I dared not fall. With dark nails they pierced me through, on me the dagger strokes are seen; wounds they were of wickedness. Yet I dared not do them scathe; they reviled us both together. From head to foot was I drenched with blood, poured from this hero's side, when he had sent forth His Spirit. A host of wrathful weirds I bore upon that mount. I saw the Lord of peoples serve a cruel service: thick darkness had enwreathed with clouds the corse of the King. Shadow, wan under the welkin, pressed down the clear shining of the sun. All creation wept, mourned the fall of its King; Christ was on the Rood. I beheld it all; I was crushed with sorrow. . . . Then they took Almighty God; from that heavy pain they lifted him; but the warriors left me there to stand streaming with blood. I was all wounded with shafts." Then he tells of the deposition, and how he watched it—

So they laid him down, limb-wearied; stood beside the head of his lifeless corse.
Then they looked upon him, him the Lord of Heaven, and he rested there for a little time
Sorely weary he, when the mickle strife was done! Then before his Banes, in the sight of them,
Did the men begin, here to make a grave for him. And they carved it there, of a glittering stone,
Laid him low in it, him the Lord of Victory! Over him poor folk sang a lay of sorrow
On that eventide. l. 63.

There he rested with a little company. But we stood on the hill for a while, dropping blood, till men buried us deep, and that was a dreadful Weird. And now far and wide, when the servants of the Lord discovered me, men honour me. Now I bid thee, Man beloved of me, tell this dream to men.

[1] This line is not longer than the original, and the pauses are pretty much the same. Short lines follow it, and then the long line is taken up again. I allot, as before, the long lines to the original poem on which Cynewulf worked, and the short lines to his own hand.

The Rood then speaks of judgment to come, and that whoso beareth this best of signs in his heart will have no fear on that day. It ceases speech; and that personal part of the poem follows on which I have already written.

This is the last of the important poems of the eighth century. It is good, but not very good. The older part, if my conjecture be right,[1] is the best, and its reworking by Cynewulf has so broken it up that its dignity is much damaged. The shaping is rude, but the imagination has indeed shaped it. The image of the towering Tree, now shining through a golden light and overwrought like a Rood at Ripon or Hexham with jewelled lines of ornament, now veiled in a crimson mist and streaming with blood, is conceived with power, but it is not to be compared with the image of the mighty Rood in the *Christ* which illuminates with ruddy light the heavens and the earth and all the hosts of angels and of men summoned from their graves to judgment. The invention of the Tree, bringing its soul from the far-off wood, alive and suffering with every pang of the great Sufferer, shivering through every vein of it when Christ, the young Hero, clasped it round, and mourning when he lay beneath, and longing to fall on and slay his foes, and conscious that on it, as on a field of battle, Death and Hell were conquered, is also well worth praise, but the praise must not be carried too far. The workmanship is not the workmanship of a fine artist. We cannot expect it, and the wonder is that at this time it was so good.

[1] I have called it *my* conjecture, but I have since found that the writers of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, in their *Excursus on Metres* have had a somewhat similar opinion. They say "In the Lay of the Rood, attributed to Caedmon, as it seems, on the Ruthwell Cross, we have the purest piece of poetry in this metre. In the Vercelli book in which it is preserved, there is tacked on to it another poem on a somewhat similar subject, but wholly different in style and metre, which may very possibly be Cynewulf's." I think the *whole* was reworked by Cynewulf.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SCHOOL OF YORK

While Cynewulf and his imitators were making the poems about which we have now written, the Collegiate School at York, founded on a secure basis by Ecgberht while Baeda was still alive, was steadily flourishing. Under its auspices not only Latin but English literature was cared for, if I am right in my guess that it was at York that those collections of English verse were made, which were afterwards brought to Wessex in the days of Ælfred. That school began no doubt with Wilfrid, but it did not become the notable school of England till the days of Archbishop Ecgberht, and it ran a noble and vigorous career of fifty years. After 782 it began to decay, but with a certain stately slowness. When it was dead, — and it finally died of the Danes, — its learning and its spirit, having emigrated with Alcuin, went forth to animate the wide empire of Charles the Great. It is the history of this school, the last home of literature in the England of the eighth century, which we have now to write, and the tale of it will conclude this book.

After the death of Baeda in 735, the seat of letters was transferred from Jarrow to York. Learning passed from a provincial monastery to the centre of the life of Northumbria. It passed from the guardianship of one man to the watchful care of a number of trained scholars, acting together, and teaching, like professors, their own special subjects, under the rule of one Head. We may, with some justice, call the School of York the first English University. Canterbury, under Theodore, was not more than a brilliant monastic school, and at Theodore's death its literary influence died. But the Heads of York provided for the continuance of the school, and for an organisation of it which we might call corporate. The system of teaching seems to have been subdivided, specialised, and handed down intact for at least two generations. York became

the storehouse and distributor of learning for civilised Europe. Scholars flocked to it from all parts of Germany, Gaul, Italy, and Ireland. The new European schools, desiring a teacher, either sent one of their own men to take, as it were, a degree at York, or fetched to rule over them an Englishman who had the York certificate. If we add to these things the Cathedral, the great library, the collegiate buildings where the teachers and the pupils lived together, something of the image of a University is presented to our eyes.

The town itself was not unworthy of the fame it attained in learning. It had been the capital of Roman Britain, and Britain lay so outside of the Empire that York was called *altera Roma*. It might have even been called an imperial city. Constantius dwelt in it. When Baeda takes trouble to record that Severus died and that Constantine was made Emperor within its walls, we feel that the historic imagination of the learned English had cast around it, like a toga, the dignity of Rome. Long before Baeda, the Northumbrians made it their chief city. It was the centre of the supremacy of Eadwine, and it finally became the royal seat of the Northumbrian kings. It saw the first Christian King of Northumbria baptized, and he and Paullinus set up the little chapel of wood which grew into the Minster. Its spiritual and ecclesiastical history equalled in interest its political history, and now at the time of which we write, it became again the seat of an archbishopric. No doubt, this addition to its ecclesiastical position gave its school a greater vogue in England and in Europe.

Nor was its people or its situation unworthy of its memories. It was thickly populated by a thriving, brave, and comfortable folk. To the crowd of its own citizens were added a number of foreigners who came to dwell in it for the sake of gain or education. The landscape that surrounded it was lovely; its air healthy; the Ouse flowed full beside its walls and was joined by the Foss, then a broad, deep and sluggish stream. In the triangle the streams made lay the town, but it had extended far beyond its walls, and the well-watered plains were covered with houses. The flowery meadows which bordered the river, the wooded hills beyond, earned the praise of Alcuin who loved his *Alma Mater* well. Learning had here a softer clime and dwelling-place than had nourished its hardy youth among the rocky fields, and near the stormy tides of Jarrow.[1]

[1] Hanc piscosa suis undis interfluit Usa,
Florigeros ripis praetendens undique campos;

This was the city which, as the home of Letters, rose into fame with Ecgberht who, at the date of Baeda's death, became Archbishop of York. He had succeeded Wilfrid II. as Bishop in 732. A year or two afterwards, and perhaps at Ecgberht's own urging,[1] Baeda had sent to York his *Epistola ad Egbertum*, of the form and style of which I have already written. A brief abstract of its contents will now show us the state of Northumbria and the work which lay before Ecgberht. "Be good," it said, "let your language and life be decent and your doctrine sound. Study the Scriptures, ordain more priests, translate the Lord's Prayer and the Creed into English, look after your diocese, there are hamlets in the mountains which have never seen a bishop. The greed of bishops has prevented the subdivision of dioceses. Let there be twelve bishoprics in Northumbria, and do you get the pallium. As to the monasteries, they are in an evil way. There is no proper discipline, and a host of abuses. Lay folk, for thirty years past, have purchased lands for monasteries which, freed from secular jurisdiction, have become their own property. Almost every praefectus has done this; the officers of the King have followed their example; their wives are lodged in their houses; and all of them do what they like. Hence the whole diocese is filled with luxury, corruption, and disorder. Reform, reform." This was the ecclesiastical condition, and it is plain that in monasteries of this type, and in the midst of such abuses, learning was not likely to continue to flourish. Ecgberht took them in hand and did all he could, not all he wished. At least, if they could not be bettered, he bettered his own house. The community at York was lifted into an example for the whole diocese.

The political condition, as well as the ecclesiastical, had some influence on the literary history of the school of York, and at two points. First, a certain renewed glory and peace in Northumbria now accompanied for too brief a period the effort Ecgberht was making at York, and enabled his school to develop itself in a quiet safety. King Eadberht, who succeeded

> Collibus et silvis tellus hinc inde decora
> Nobilibusque locis habitatio pulchra, salubris,
> Fertilitate sui multos habitura colonos;
> Quo variis populis et regnis undique lecti
> Spe lucri veniunt, quaerentes divite terra
> Divitias, sedem sibimet, lucrumque laremque.
>
> Alcuin, *De Pont. Ebor.* 30.

[1] I believe that Ecgberht and Baeda concocted this letter together. The warnings given to Ecgberht about decent language and other matters in which Baeda knew Ecgberht did not sin, appear to be directed to others through Ecgberht, and this seems a pious and courteous way of blame.

Baeda's friend Ceolwulf in 737 or 738, brought Northumbria into better order and recovered some of the dominion it had lost. This peace with honour would help the work at York. It only lasted till 756, when a dreadful disaster at Niwanbyrig was the cause that two years afterwards Eadberht abdicated and settled at York for the rest of his life. Secondly, we must remember that Eadberht was brother of Ecgberht, and that from 737 to 758 the King gave his brother full royal patronage. It is plain they were on good terms, for when the King abdicated he went at once to live with the Archbishop. I cannot but think that his presence, even as a retired monarch, gave support and prestige to the school. He died in the year 768, two years after Ecgberht. Between them, I imagine, they practically ruled the city.

Ecgberht then had external support, and he was worthy of it, both as prince and scholar. He was a splendid and generous man, with fine tastes. Richly carved vessels, richly figured silks, elaborate music were used and cherished in the Minster.[1] Round about the Cathedral and in connection with it rose the schools, filled, as I have said, with students from England, Ireland, Gaul, Germany, and Italy. Ecgberht as the Head, undertook the finishing course of religious and theological instruction. The other branches of learning were put into the hands of his assistants. The education began with grammar and continued through literature and philosophy and such other subjects as Theodore and Hadrian had taught at Canterbury. The pupils gained a fair acquaintance with the Latin poets, some knowledge of the Greek fathers, and as much natural philosophy as could be learned from Pliny. The study of the Scriptures was carried on during the whole course. Ecgberht finished the education of the students, but he kept always in touch with them. We are told that he spent the morning with the young clerks, sitting on his couch, teaching and lecturing. At noon he celebrated mass in his private chapel; his dinner was meagre. During the meal and afterwards he discussed literary questions with the students. At

[1] The arts of embroidery and illumination, of working in gold, silver, and precious stones had steadily grown in Northumbria. Monks, even the anchorite in his cell, wrought at vessels and bindings for the sacred offices. The best instance out of many is the famous "Evangeliarium," called also the *Durham Book*, or the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, which, after a long and curious history, now rests in the British Museum. Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, had written and illuminated it. It was begun during Cuthbert's life. Æthelwald, who succeeded Eadfrith, and who caused to be made "a lovely cross" of wrought stone as a memorial of Cuthbert, gave also a cover to the Manuscript which Bilfrid, an anchorite and goldsmith, decorated with silver, gold, and gems.

evening, after the service, he dismissed them, as they knelt one by one before him, with his blessing. No life could be more gentle and simple. Splendid in public, he was sparing in private affairs. His chief work was, therefore, educational, but he wrote a few books — a volume of Episcopal Offices, Extracts on Church Discipline, a Penitentiale and Confessionale, standard authorities in the Anglo-Saxon Church. It is probable that these were written both in English and Latin, and, if this be true, we may class him among English writers.[1]

When he died, in 766, he was succeeded by Æthelberht or Ælberht, his friend, his chief assistant in the school, and a better scholar than himself. It was Æthelberht who taught, under Ecgberht, grammar, law, poetry, rhetoric, astronomy, natural philosophy, and all the matters Alcuin collects under Physica, Logica, and Ethica. We may well call him, not only a great ecclesiastic, but a great Public Schoolmaster. Æthelberht was the chief collector and administrator of the famous library. Alcuin, his fellow-scholar, who assisted him in the teaching of the schools, travelled also with him, seeking for books and manuscripts in Gaul and Rome, and in 770 no library outside of Rome was to be compared with that at York.[2] Under his rule, and he was equally remarkable, Alcuin says, for activity of mind, tact in administration, and lovingness of heart, learning radiated from York even more lucidly than under Ecgberht; a greater number of students poured into the city, and missionary enterprise was not forgotten. The Church in Germany was deeply indebted to him. Nor in other matters were his interests only English. He was in constant correspondence with Rome and the great monastic centres. York knew all that was doing and

[1] Wright, *Biog. Literaria*, vol. i. p. 302.

[2] Here is Alcuin's description of the studies Æthelberht directed at York —

> Indolis egregiae juvenes quoscunque videbat,
> Hos sibi conjunxit, docuit, nutrivit, amavit;
> His dans grammaticae rationis gnaviter artes,
> Illis rhetoricae infundens refluamina linguae;
> Illos juridica curavit cote polire;
> Illos Aonio docuit concinnere cantu,
> Et juga Parnassi lyricis percurrere plantis.
> Ast alios fecit praefatus nosse magister
> Harmoniam coeli, solis lunaeque labores,
> Quinque poli zonas, errantia sydera septem,
> Astrorum leges, ortus simul atque recessus,
> Aerios motus pelagi, terraeque tremorem,
> Naturas hominum, pecudum, volucrumque ferarum,
> Diversas numeri species variasque figuras.
> Paschalique dedit solemnia certa recursu,
> Maxime Scripturae pandens mysteria sacrae.
>
> *De Pont. Ebor.*

was an impulse over the whole of Christendom. Art also was not neglected. In 741 the Minster at York was burnt. Æthelberht remade it; he preserved and embellished the little oratory in which Eadwine was baptized in 627, and set up in it an altar dedicated to St. Paul, enriched with gold, silver, and gems. A huge candelabrum of three branches hung over it, and a Rood embossed with gold and silver. Another altar to the Martyrs and the Holy Cross was ornamented with equal richness. Eanbald, the next Archbishop, and Alcuin superintended the building. Alcuin describes it as a lofty temple, set on pillars over the crypts, bright with ceilings and windows, apsidal chapels round, and containing thirty altars. It is pleasant to think that Æthelberht saw it finished, and blessed his work. He had retired from his duties in 780, but ten days before his death in 782 he emerged from his rooms and dedicated the Minster he had raised. Well might he have said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," for he had not only written his epistle on the hearts of the many scholars he had trained, and especially on Alcuin, whose work transfused Europe with the new learning, but he had now written in stone a noble memorial of his love of God and man. Wise, eager in learning as teaching, a greater traveller and searcher for books than even his predecessor Ecgberht,[1] a better librarian, a passionate lover of the books he had collected (*caras super omnia gazas*, he calls them), safe in advice, ready in sympathy, his praise was tenderly sung by his finest scholar —

> O pater, O pastor, vitae spes maxima nostrae,
> Te sine nos ferimur turbata per aequora mundi,
> Te duce deserti variis involvimur undis,
> Incerti qualem mereamur tangere portum.
> Sidera dum lucent, trudit dum nubila ventus,
> Semper honos, nomenque tuum, laudesque manebunt.
> *De Pont. Ebor.* 1596.

During Æthelberht's life Alcuin had taught the school, and raised its fame and use to a higher level; but the date of Æthelberht's death is also the date of the beginning of the decay of the learning of York. Not only did Eanbald, his successor, become involved in the political anarchy of Northum-

[1] Alcuin says of Ecgberht —

> Non semel externas peregrino tramite terras
> Jam peragravit ovans, Sophiae ductus amore;
> Si quid forte novi librorum aut studiorum
> Quod secum ferret, terris reperiret in illis.
> *De Pont. Ebor.* 1454.

bria, and neglected, or could not direct, the school; but in the very year of Æthelberht's death Alcuin left the school. Up to 782 Alcuin belongs to literature in England. The literary child of Baeda, his birth almost coincides with Baeda's death. A greater scholar than either Ecgberht or Æthelberht, he was the pupil of both. He not only, as we have seen, took charge of the school when Æthelberht became Archbishop, but he was entrusted with the care and increase of the library.[1] In these earlier duties he learnt to be the great administrator, organiser, and teacher he afterwards became. He met Charles for the first time at Pavia, about 780, and pleased the King. He met him again at Parma, in 781, joined his court in 782, and remained eight years, taking charge of the Palatine Schools. All this time he was eagerly at work, teaching and establishing fresh schools, "restoring the knowledge," says Bishop Stubbs, "of the sacred languages, of the text of the Bible and Service Books, and the moral rigour of ecclesiastical discipline. How laboriously Alcuin did these duties, the list of his works will show. The extent of his influence is proved by his letters, and the success of his work by the literary history of the following century."

In 790 he was again in Northumbria, and the love of his country urged him to remain, but in 792 he rejoined Charles and never again visited England. Thus we may say that from this year, or more truly from 782, Alcuin does not belong to the history of literature in England, but to the history of the new planting of literature on the Continent by the hands of English scholars.[2] He took with him a number of men who had been educated at York, both English and foreign,[3] and

[1] He writes to Charles the Great from Tours in 796: "I feel bitterly here the need of those priceless books of learning which I had in my own country, by the loving industry of my master, and in some measure by my own humble labours. Let me send some of my youth over to bring back to France the flowers of Britain."

[2] Baeda remained the specially English scholar. Alcuin's questions on Genesis, and it may be a few other of his works, were translated into Anglo-Saxon in the tenth century, and Wright says that the number of manuscripts of it which are still extant suggests that it was a popular book.

[3] Liudger, a Frieslander, Sigibodus, and Alubert, an English missionary, were sent by Gregory of Utrecht to study at York with Alcuin. Liudger stayed a year and returned, but again lived in England for three years and a half, and finally bore back with him a large store of books. His history is the history of many. Wizo, Fridugis, and Sigulf went abroad with Alcuin. We hear, however, by name of few native English scholars as assistants of Alcuin. Nevertheless a host of his countrymen crowded to see him at Tours. Lingard quotes a story from his biographer: "As Aigulf, an English priest, entered the monastery at Tours, four of the French clergy were standing at the gate, and one of them exclaimed in his own language — 'Good God! when will this house be delivered from the crowds of Britons who swarm to that old fellow like so many bees?'"

with their assistance set up higher schools in Gaul and Germany. He constantly sent to York for books and fresh helpers. English scholars visited him, wherever he was, in large numbers, and many remained with him. Northumbria was in too unsettled a state to suit scholars who wished to get on in life. They preferred a growing to a decaying kingdom, and it is not too much to say that Alcuin drained York of its best scholars, and hastened the paralysis of its literature.

He died in 804, and left behind him an extensive series of books, many of which did their work of kindling the new fires of learning in Europe, and then were exhausted, or superseded. His numerous exegetical, dogmatic, and liturgical works are of no value as literature. A few biographies remain, of which the most interesting is that of St. Willibrord, the apostle of the Frisians, of whose noble house he was himself a scion. The longest of his many Latin poems (of which the most heartfelt is that on the destruction of Lindisfarne) is also the most attractive — *De Pontificibus et Sanctis Ecclesiae Eboracensis.* It is our best contemporary authority for the history of the Church and School of York from the consecration of Ecgberht to the accession of Eanbald, and is full of pleasant details. But the most important of his writings, both as literature and for the use of history, is the collection of his letters, nearly three hundred of which exist. Many are written to his correspondents in England, to English kings, bishops, abbots, and monks; many of a gayer kind to his pupils and friends, and to the women he reverenced. Others are sent to Charles the Great, to Adrian I., to the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Aquileia, to his fellow-workers in the renaissance of learning in Gaul and Germany; and they form together a body of materials of great importance for the history of the time.

None of this work belongs to English literature in England; but it belongs to the glory of England to say that it was an English scholar of York who exactly at the right time bore off to the Continent the whole of English learning, and out of English learning built up a new world. Had Alcuin remained in England, had learning been confined to our shores, it would have perished in a few years under the destroying flood of the Danish invasions. It lived and flourished and brought forth a noble harvest in the new empire. Instead of a little and dying kingdom in the north of England the huge Frankish dominion became the home of literature. The patron of learning was no longer a small provincial king, like Eadberht, with his power trembling to its fall, but the man who in a few years

became the Head of the Holy Roman Empire; and the glory of that great title and of all it meant threw its glamour and its dignity over letters. They marched with the Empire's march and took of its youth and energy. Alcuin led them, nourished and established them. The seat of learning was thus no longer England, but the new city was built with living stones from England. This is one of our glories, and York may well boast of being its fount and origin. But this glory was now no longer in York itself. The death of Æthelberht and the departure of Alcuin in the same year place us at the point when the decay of the school of York began. Learning sickened from within, afflicted by the anarchy in Northumbria, and when she was far gone in disease she was finally smitten to death by the Danes. The history of this double woe, and the destruction in which it ended, will close this book.

In 780 Æthelberht, retiring from active life, associated with himself Eanbald, who, two years afterwards, succeeded him as Archbishop, and came to his death in 796. During these fourteen stormy years the School at York lived on, but it lived in trouble and in fear. King after king of Northumbria was dethroned, exiled or murdered. Four of them perished before the Archbishop's death. Alfwold, who became king in 778, was slain in 789. Osred, who succeeded him, was betrayed and driven away in 790, and Æthelred, now king, had himself been banished by Alfwold. Two years afterwards Æthelred slew Osred who had tried to regain the kingdom. In his turn, Æthelred was slaughtered by his own people in 794, and Eardulf succeeded him in 795, the year before Archbishop Eanbald died. In these fierce tempests of anarchy no assistance could be given by the kings to the school at York, and the political troubles probably disturbed the lives and work of its teachers. Indeed, with the exception of a few letters addressed to Eanbald by his friend Alcuin, there is no literary news belonging to his archbishopric. Affairs were no better, but rather worse during the years of his successor, Eanbald II. A fierce revolt, led by Alric, was finally subdued by Eardulf at the battle of Whalley in 798. The next year Eardulf slew another pretender to the kingdom, and the year after he murdered Alchmund, the legitimate heir to the Northumbrian throne. Six years of comparative quiet followed, and then Eardulf was driven away by another Alfwold who apparently held a precarious kingship for four years. Eanred then, the son of Eardulf, seized the throne in 810, and reigned over an expiring Northumbria. The *Chronicle* takes no notice of him

or of any one after Eardulf; and it tells of the close of the independent Northumbrian kingdom, when Ecgberht of Wessex became its overlord, in terms almost contemptuous in their brevity. "827. And Ecgberht led an army to Dore against the North Humbrians and they offered him there obedience and allegiance, and with that, they separated." This was the state of things during the archbishopric of Eanbald II.; and it accounts for the increasing sickness of the school of York. It was not met by any noble sacrifice on the part of the clergy. They became more and more luxurious; the monasteries went from bad to worse; the parish priests lost all learning. Even the Archbishop lived more like a temporal than a spiritual prince. Troops of soldiers attended him and troops of courtiers, as he went from place to place through his diocese. Alcuin was greatly distressed by all he heard; he hopes, and the hope is like a reproach, "that sacred studies will not be neglected at York, and all the pains I took in collecting books be labour lost." It was labour lost for Northumbria now, but it was not altogether Eanbald's fault that he could not attend to the school at York. He had quarrelled with the court; the political whirlpool had sucked him in. King Eardulf complained that he sheltered his enemies and joined the plots against his throne. Hence, the Archbishop was seldom or never at York, and the School naturally ebbed away. In addition to this, we understand from the records of the Synod of Pincanhalth held in 790 — the first and last synod of doctrinal note since that of Whitby — that the old Celtic party had not quite died out, and that there was a reaction in York itself against the Latin authority represented by the Archbishop, at least this is Mr. Raine's opinion. Of greater interest than this supposition is a sentence in one of the decrees of this synod the mournful cry of which makes us feel that the days of Northumbria's religious and literary glory had passed away. "There were days," it says, "when we had righteous kings and dukes and bishops, of whose wisdom Northumbria still smells sweetly." *Fuimus Troes.* It is the epitaph of Northumbria, of her poetry, her literature, and her great school. All is now weakness, indifference, and darkness.

This is the internal decay. Meanwhile, from without a dreadful blow had been given to literature and knowledge. In 793, while Eanbald I. was Archbishop of York, the Vikings dashed for the first time upon the coasts of Northumbria. So terrible seemed the blow, the very heavens and earth were thought to have presaged it. "This year," says the *Chronicle,*

"dire forewarnings came on the land of the Northumbrians and brought wretchedness and fear upon the folk. There were mickle whirlwinds and lightnings, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air. A great famine followed these tokens, and a little after that in the same year, on the 6th before the Ides of January, the ravaging of heathen men mournfully overthrew God's Church at Lindisfarne with rapine and slaughter." Nor was this the only warning. Alcuin saw, in 790, when he was on a visit to Ethelred, "a rain of blood at a time when the sky was cloudless fall from the high roof of the northern aisle of St. Peter in York, the capital of the kingdom. Did it not denote," he writes to the King, "that carnage would come upon us and from the North?" These are words which only express half his horror and distress.[1] He cries out elsewhere that the sanctuaries were defiled at Lindisfarne, the priests slain at the altar, that St. Cuthbert could not save his own. "The most venerable place in Britain, where Christianity first took root among us after Paullinus went away from York, is a prey to heathen men. Who thinks of this calamity and does not cry out to God to spare his country, has a heart of stone and not of flesh." He wrote, however, from his safe retreat on the Continent, and he could not avoid preaching a somewhat elaborate sermon on luxury to the monastery. "This is," he says, "the beginning of a greater trouble to come, or a punishment for their sins." The first supposition was true, and he might have spared them the second. Afterwards, when the horror of it had lessened, he was able to compose on the tempting subject one of his best Latin poems.

The year after he had another opportunity, for "the heathen ravaged among the North Humbrians again, and plundered Ecgferth's monastery at the mouth of the Wear." When Jarrow and Wearmouth thus suffered, Alcuin was even more grieved. The mother church of Northumbria was smitten at Lindisfarne; but the mother of all Northumbrian learning was smitten at Jarrow, and this struck the scholar a still heavier blow. What would become of knowledge, of all the materials of knowledge, of the libraries, of the school at the capital, if the heathen prevailed still more? But Northumbria had yet a breathing time before the full wrath of the tempest broke upon her. Wearmouth and Jarrow, warned by Lindisfarne, were not surprised. They were defended, and it is probable

[1] I am not sure of the date of this letter. If it was written before 793, the phrase "and from the North" would have nothing to do with the attack on Lindisfarne.

that the libraries were saved for a time. One of the Danish leaders was slain. Some of their ships were wrecked by a storm. Many of their crews were drowned, and those who swam to shore alive were slain at the mouth of the river. It may be that this repulse kept the coast somewhat free from roving piracy; for we do not hear of more than a few attacks made on the Northumbrian shores; and it is probable that the monastic life went on, undisturbed save by fear, in Tynemouth and Jarrow, at Coldingham and Whitby.

It was a different story later on when the Danish fury came upon the Northumbrian monasteries, not from the sea, but from the inland; not with a few ships led by single rovers, but with a well-horsed and complete army. This took place in 867. There was an interval then of seventy-four years between the attack on Lindisfarne and the final destruction of the Northumbrian seats of learning. During that time uneasiness, dread, preparations for defence, absence of quiet and of hope, weakened at every point the growth of learning. Whenever an attack was made on a coast-monastery, its treasures and its books would probably be sent into the interior, and I believe that, as the Danes pressed harder on the East Anglian coasts, and as their terror grew in the North, York became the refuge and the receiver of the best of the books and learned men of Northumbria. This was the centre which was now attacked. "The Army," having wintered and horsed itself in East Anglia, passed over the mouth of the Humber into Northumbria and, assisted by the anarchy in the kingdom, for two rivals were fighting for the throne, had an easy conquest of York. Late in the year the two kings united their forces against the common foe, drove the Danes from the fortifications, burst into the town and all but won it back. But the Danes rallied and drove the English out in turn, slew both kings, and the remainder made peace with the army of the heathen. With the fall of the capital Northumbria became Danish. But the rest of the province was still unplundered, and the Danes, setting out from York, burned and utterly destroyed all the monastic establishments of Deira. A few years after, "the Army," under Halfdene, rooted out all the Abbeys of Bernicia. There was not one house of learning left from the Humber to the Forth. Bishoprics perished, even so great a one as Hexham; all the libraries, all the schools, all the stored-up knowledge of two hundred years were swept away; and the same fate about the same time befel the great monastic houses of Mercia and East Anglia. Amid this vast

destruction, so overwhelming that Northumbria did not recover from it till long after the Norman Conquest, York, it appears to me, still retained some learning. As it seems partly to have escaped destruction when the English took it, so it seems to have been partly spared by the Danes. They made a peace with its people in 867; they sat there a whole year in 869. It was the headquarters of "the Army," and it is likely that the School, so far as it existed at all, was let alone. If it was let alone, it would save its most precious manuscripts; and all the men who succeeded in escaping from Wearmouth, Whitby, Tynemouth, Lastingham, Ripon, Hexham, and the rest, would find some shelter there for themselves and for whatever books they had saved. There would be then at York enough of Northumbrian literature left to supply Wessex in Ælfred's reign with English war-poems like *Beowulf*, and with collections of religious poems like those in the Exeter Book. This possibility, to which I draw attention, of York having as a seat of literature escaped the absolute destruction which fell upon the other schools and libraries of the North seems somewhat supported by the fact of the great increase not long after this time of the power of the See of York. Moreover, if the School was not utterly destroyed at first, it would be likely to drag on an existence; for only nine years after the capture of York by the Danes the invaders settled down, and York became the capital under a constituted government of a Danish kingdom. Halfdene in 876 apportioned the lands of South Northumbria among his followers. They began to live as ploughers and tillers of the soil. The city again sat as Queen upon her river; merchants again took up their quarters in her streets, the place was quiet; the Archbishop still governed the churches. Amid the gloom which hangs over history at this time we distinguish nothing of the School, but if anything was saved of the library, the letters and the manuscripts in the buildings about the Minster, it now continued safe; and when it became known in the North that Ælfred welcomed to his court all who could bring him a book or a manuscript to add to the library at Winchester, the remnants of literature left at York would be carried southward. It was thus, I suggest, that the Northumbrian poetry reached Wessex, and reaching it, was put into the Wessex dialect.[1]

[1] Mercia may, however, have had something to do with this. The western part of Mercia had been saved at the peace of Wedmore from the Danes, and Bishop Werfrith had kept some learning and teaching together in the school he set up at Worcester. Worcester may then have been the half-way house in

This is the last word of the first act of English literature which we have followed for so long. The curtain falls on the scenes the action of which moved with Theodore and Ealdhelm in Canterbury and Wessex; on those which in a wilder land brought before our eyes the cliffs of Whitby, the island rock of Lindisfarne, the Wear where it opens towards the sea, the lonely moors of the border, the peopled vales of Yorkshire, the school beside the Minster. All has passed away, and with the scenery the great figures that went to and fro through it — Eadwine and Oswald, Caedmon and Hild, Benedict and Baeda, Ecgberht, Æthelberht, and Alcuin, Cynewulf and his fellows; and behind them, in the mists of the distant ground, and in another England, the giant shapes of Beowulf and Hygelac, of Grendel and his dam, of Finn and Scyld. The first Act is played out; when the curtain rises again, it will rise on a different scene, and in a different land. Wessex will take the place of Northumbria. We shall then look on the royal figure of Ælfred, his sword laid down for a time, his pen in his hand, sitting in his king's houses or in his town of Winchester, and grouped around him the scholars of a new time; and the fashion of their speech will have changed. As the characters of the first Act of English Literature spoke in poetry, so those of the second will speak in prose.

which many of the poor scholars, bearing manuscripts from York, took refuge, before they made their way to Ælfred. It was in western Mercia that Ælfred sought for help when he began his literary work. But the story of this belongs properly to the next volume of this book.

NOTES

A. — (CHAPTER I)

WIDSITH

The introduction may have been written on the continent by a poet of the Angles, for "the poet clearly refers to the old country under the title of *Ongle*." The country of Eormanric was, he says, "east from Ongle." This is the view of Dr. Guest, and he thinks that this part of the poem belongs to the time after the Ostrogoths had left the Vistula, probably between the years 480 and 547, the date of Ida's occupation of Bamborough. This would put the original poem, which begins at line 10, back into an earlier part of the fifth century, between the years, as Guest conjectures, 433 and 440. If we take, with him, the poem as genuine, the poet was contemporary in his youth with Eormanric, and must have sung in his court before the year 375, when this King of the Goten died. But the poet also mentions Ætla (Attila) as king. But Attila was not king till 433. The poem then, to include these two dates, must have been written in Widsith's old age, and after 433. Moreover, Guest continues, "the Goths appear in the poem as the enemies, still independent, of Attila"; and he makes a criticism which, coming from so careful an historian, must not be omitted. "Eormanric and his generals are spoken of in the poem in a sober manner. We see none of the fable which afterwards enveloped their names; they are still the mere creatures of history."

But all this is subject to other explanations, and we can come to no certainty about it. The most that critics can dare to suggest is, first: "That the theory which maintains the genuineness of the poem is the theory which is beset with the fewest difficulties" (Guest); and secondly, that the kernel of the poem, from verse 10 to verse 75, and from verse 87 to the close (verses 131–134 being excepted) is very old, the oldest English poetry we possess.[1] Originally written by a Myrging, it was adopted by the Angles, to whom the Myrgings, if we may conjecture this from a passage in the poem, were tributary in the days of Offa of Ongle.

The poet represents himself as contemporary with Hermanric, Attila, the Visigoth Wallia, the Burgundian Gibica, and these kings range from the year 375 to 435. He also speaks of Offa of Ongle, Ongentheow, Hrothgar, Finn and Hnaef as known of by him, and as historical rather than legendary personages.

[1] This great age is agreed to by Leo, Müllenhof, Ten Brink, Möller, and Wülker, to speak of the Germans alone.

But this theory of the genuineness of the poem is not so easily settled. In the midst of the list, other kings are mentioned whose reigns extend beyond 440, and whose names, if we accept the visit to Eormanric as genuine, must have been afterwards interpolated. This is certainly the case if we are to take Ælfwine, whom Widsith says he met, as identical with Alboin, who was not king in Italy till the year 568. Guest avoids this difficulty by making the Ælfwine of the poem one of the chiefs who followed Alaric in his inroad, 401 A.D.

The editors of the *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* assume at once, without expressing a shade of doubt on the matter, that the Traveller's Song was written after the death of Alboin, 572 A.D. They quote a passage concerning Ælfwine's (Alboin's) fame from Paul the Deacon, and say, "This passage is strikingly confirmed by the fame of Ælfwine having reached even the English author of the Traveller's Song." This opinion makes the poem to be written in our England, and probably not earlier than the seventh century, a view which is not without its critical supporters. Maurer, referring to the mention of the Cæsar in it, places it still later, after the time of Charles the Great, and suggests that the name Vikingas which occurs in the list of tribes, points to a time when the English had made acquaintance with the northern rovers.

On the other hand, it has been held, and by a number of commentators, that the insertion of names later than the fifth century is due to the work of an interpolator, who probably lived in England in the seventh century, and that the total absence of any mention of our England as England goes far to prove — independent altogether of the directness and simplicity of the personal portion — that the body of the poem was composed upon the continent. The English editor of the seventh century would then have used the ancient poem as a frame into which he inserted what men had come to know (a hundred years let us say after the death of Alboin), of other countries and their rulers, introducing also, from his own knowledge, the passage concerning the Picts and Scots and the Armoricans. We should then have a poem, the body of which was composed by a man who in his youth may have been a contemporary of Eormanric in the fourth century, but who did not write his verses till the fifth century, 435–440, and which, brought to Britain by the Angles, was taken up, added to, and produced in its present form in the seventh or eighth century.

A word remains to be said about some names interesting to us. The poet stays his hand in the middle of his list to speak at some length of Offa who ruled Ongle, as if Offa's history were specially bound up with his own tribe. "Offa," he says, "set up, while yet a youth, the greatest of kingdoms. With his sword alone he widened his marches against the Myrgings, by Fifeldor. And as Offa fixed it, so Engle and Swaefe held their place." We only know Offa as a legendary hero, whose story gets mixed up afterwards with that of Offa of Mercia. But this sober mention of him has the air of history rather than of legend, and the fight at Fifeldor, which in after saga is clothed with imaginative details, is here wholly free from them. We seem to touch a piece of reality concerning a king who was in ancient days, one of ourselves, a great Englishman who fought the battles of the Angles in the lands about the Elbe. Whether this is really so will, I suppose, be discussed till every possible theory is exhausted. The reference to the Engle and Swaefe as neighbouring nations is also to the point. "It is clear from this," says Guest, "that the

latter had not as yet left the shores of the Baltic. This is one of the many circumstances which prove the great antiquity of the poem."

Another passage of interest is that in which the writer also interrupts his mere catalogue of names to tell a piece of history or of what seems history. It contains names well known to us from the poem of *Beowulf*. He speaks of Hrothgar, and of his famous Hall, Heorot, and he speaks of both without any allusion whatever to the legend of Beowulf and Grendel. It seems as if this poem had been written before the legend of Beowulf had been connected with Hrothgar and Heorot. So also he speaks of Finn and Hnaef, who occur in one of the episodes of *Beowulf* and in the fragment we have in English of the *Fight at Finnsburg*.

Still more curious is another coincidence which I have already noticed. In one of the episodes introduced into *Beowulf* there is an account of a feud which arose between Hrothgar and Froda, and of the way the feud was healed by the marriage of Hrothgar's daughter Freaware to Ingeld, the son of Froda. But the slayer of Froda comes as attendant on Freaware to the hall of Ingeld, and Ingeld slays his father's murderer. In the trouble that follows, his love for his wife grows cold. There the episode ends, but the hero Beowulf, who tells the story, prophesies that evil will flow from it, that war will arise between Hrothgar and Ingeld. We hear nothing of the result in the poem of *Beowulf*. But the result is given us in the Traveller's Song. Widsith tells us that Heorot was attacked by Ingeld, and that he was beaten back and slain. "They" (Hrothgar, and Hrothulf his brother) "bowed down at Heorot the sword of Ingeld, hewed down at Heorot the host of the Heathobeards."

This is what Paley would have called an undesigned coincidence, and it seems to bring Hrothgar and Heorot and Ingeld, that is, some of the names in *Beowulf*, into the realm of history.

B.— (CHAPTER I)

THE LAMENT OF DEOR

Weyland, Egil, and Slagfin entrap three swan maidens who came flying through the mirkwood. Of these Lathgund clasped the white neck of Weyland. But when nine winters had gone she left him, and he stayed in Wolfdale hammering the red gold, for he was the first of smiths. Then Nidad, King of the Niars, came on him by stealth and bound him and bore him to the palace, and the queen, seeing him and his eyes like the flashing snake, was afraid, and said, "Sever the might of his sinews and set him down at Seastead;" and there Weyland, lame as the Greek smith, wrought many treasures, and thought of vengeance. And the sons of Nidad, young boys, came to Wolfmere in Seastead to see the red gold and jewels, and Weyland seized them and made cups for Nidad out of their skulls, and out of their eyeballs gems for the queen, and out of their teeth brooches for Bodwild (Beadohild). And Bodwild broke her ring and came to Weyland to get it mended, and he gave her a drink and took his will of her. And when he had so wrought his wrath he made himself wings and flew over the palace and mocked Nidad, and crying out all that he had done, rose laughing into the air, but Nidad and Bodwild sat behind with many sorrows.

This is the drift of the version in the Edda. It is the most poetical of all. The version in *Deor* is perhaps older, and it is not apparently derived from Scandinavia, but from German saga; from sagas "of which the Edda knows nothing." The names are not names of the Edda, but of German saga. England, France, and Germany know the old Scandinavian smith. *Beowulf* mentions him; Ælfred translates, by a pleasant mistake, Fabricius by his name; he appears in the "Weyland smithy" of the O. E. Berkshire charter, in the "Weyland's houses" or labyrinths of northern Europe, and in the *Galant* of the French Chansons de Gestes. His son by Bodwild is the Wade of the Wilkina Saga whose magic boat *Wingelock* was known till almost modern times in northern England.[1]

The legend of Geat and Maethhild — or of Hild and Geat, if we translate with Wülker's reading — exists only in this Anglo-Saxon song; but I would like to suggest that it may be from the same root as the story which is told in Iceland of Frey and Gerda in the lay of Skirni. Frey sits all day alone in the hall, with heavy heart-sorrow, for he saw a maid in Gymir's croft whose arms beamed so brightly that sky and sea were lit by them. Skirni, Frey's page, goes to giantland to win Gerda and bring back her consent. In three nights' time she will meet Frey at Barra, a peaceful copse, and grant her love; and Frey, when he hears, cries out, "One night is long; two nights are longer, how can I endure three? A month has often seemed shorter to me than this half bridal night." This is a close parallel of circumstance — but infinite has been such circumstance. Yet there is no reason why Geat should not have the same mythical origin as Frea (as an Angle, if he knew of him, would call Frey); though Grimm has said that he is Woden. We know Geat was one of our ancestral deities, and if his name be derived from *geotan*, "to pour," it harmonises with the character of Frey who was the bounteous summer god — the God of Love and Fruitfulness.

But who can decide aright concerning the first line of the stanza? There are at least six conjectures concerning the words *maeð hilde*. Is it a proper name, Maethhild; or is it the "dishonour, or the miserable ill-fortune of Hild" (I have left it *meed*, that which was measured to her); or are both the words to be taken as simple substantives — "this reward, or this shame, of battle" — no proper name being there?

I am myself inclined to think that there may have been a full stanza about Hild, and another about Geat, and that these two persons are not connected at all, but have here got together by the loss of four or five lines. The dishonour or the dreadful fate of Hild would then be, I suggest, an allusion to that story which afterwards, in Icelandic saga, became the tale of Hogni and Hedinn, in which Hild, the daughter of Hogni, is basely ravished away by Hedinn, to the fearful travail and torment of the two heroes, who fight together and slay one another night after night for a hundred and forty-three years, while Hild sits still in a grove hard by and looks upon the play. But this is a guess and no more.

The passage about Theodric may refer to the fable of his thirty years' exile among the Huns, but it may also refer to something which is not contained in the later myths about Theodric, and of which we have no knowledge. In explaining this and other historical and mythical allusions in Anglo-Saxon poems, Guest says, "That we must not pay too much

[1] See the "Lay of Weyland" and notes thereon in the *Corp. Poet. Boreale* vol. i. p. 168.

attention to the later myths of the Icelander and the German." There is, however, a fragment which is assumed to concern Theodric and the Maerings which is quoted in the *Corp. Poet. Bor.*, vol. i. p. 59. "It was found on an ancient Runic stone (early tenth century?) known as the Rökstone, in East Gothland, Sweden. This stone stands in the same relation to the Deor lay as does the Ruthwell Cross to the Lay of the Rood. The identity we assume from the correspondence of the name Theodrick and the Maeringa with the Maeringa-burg where, according to the old English Deor's Lay, Theodric ruled." "Theodrich the daring in mood, the lord of seamen, ruled Redmere's strand. He, the Prince of the Maerings, sitteth now in full war-gear on his steed, shield-girt."

Waiting like Barbarossa and all the other heroes who sit armed in caves — in that frequently recurring folk legend!

C. — (CHAPTER IV)

WALRUS OR SPERM WHALE?

The common explanation of the *Hronaes ban* — the *Whale's bone* in the text — is that (since the casket is of ivory) it belonged to the walrus which was hunted in the North Sea at and before the time of Ælfred. Ohthere mentions its ivory, but calls the animal the *Hors-hwael*. But the walrus, unless the weather was much colder than now in earlier times, did not come below the North Cape, and our hunter may have slain his quarry in the icy seas beyond Archangel. However, I see no reason why the walrus should not, in the eighth or the tenth century, have haunted the Shetlands or the Faroes, or the northern coasts of Norway or Scotland. If the reindeer was hunted in Caithness, the walrus may have visited the Shetlands in winter; and whether or no, as the ivory tusk of the walrus was, to our knowledge, an article of commerce in Ælfred's time, it is the most natural supposition to make our hunter's *Hronaes ban* a walrus tusk.

I have, however, made the guess (at p. 61), that it was the ivory jaw of the sperm whale, and the guess is not devoid of probability. First, I am not sure that the word *Hron* is ever used in the loose generic sense in which *Hwael* was used. *Hwael* meant any great beast that tumbled about in the sea, — a whale, a porpoise, or a seal; but when the walrus was meant, *Hors* was added to it to distinguish it from the rest. *Hron* may have been kept for the whales, as apart from the seals.

Then the whole description suits a whale-hunt better than a walrus-hunt. The mountain of water the huge head makes as it moves through the sea, the groaning of the ocean under the monster, the great distress of the beast in the shallows (a walrus would have been much more at ease among the rocks), belong to a whale driven ashore or caught in a bight of land.

Moreover, it was as easy to meet a sperm whale as to meet a walrus. If the writer, who describes the way he got his ivory, was an English sea-rover in a Viking galley, as I think very likely to be the case from the runes about Egil and Siegfried, he might come across sperm whales in the Mediterranean, or outside the Straits of Gibraltar; nor is it at all impossible that some gipsy of a sperm whale might have wandered north-

ward as far as the west coast of Scotland. There are at least two instances known of this whale being killed on the coasts of the British Isles within the last century.

When Spenser uses *Whale's-bone*, he is said to certainly mean the walrus tusk. It does not follow at all. The ivory jaw and teeth of the sperm whale were certainly known to the Elizabethans, — and the Norsemen must have also met and killed it.

D. — (CHAPTER V)

ON THE WORSHIP OF WODEN BY THE ENGLISH, AND ON SCEAF

It is a remarkable thing that there is no mention whatever in the whole of Anglo-Saxon literature before Ælfred of Woden being the god of the English. This is scarcely accounted for by the desire of Christian writers to suppress the name of heathen gods. In the seventh century, when many suppose that the legends of *Beowulf* were given, on the whole, their present form, a Christian poet would not be so particular; and it is astonishing that not the faintest allusion is made to Woden in *Beowulf*, if his was the name of the supreme god of the English. Baeda himself has no objection to speak of two heathen goddesses by name, and to trace the name of Easter to Eostra. Moreover, if Woden had been ever of the same importance in England as he became in Germany proper, in Scandinavia in later times, or in England after the Danish invasion, some hint of his existence, some words derived from his attributes, would, we should think, have stolen into the large body of poetry which we owe to Cynewulf; or into poems like the *Wanderer* or the *Wife's Complaint* and a few others, the bulk of which seems either pagan or semi-pagan, written on the border-line between Christianity and heathendom. But not one word appears; and Baeda and Ealdhelm are just as silent. When Grimm tries to get Woden into early English poetry, all he can do is to say that *woma* ("clamor, sonitus") is connected with *Omi*, which is, he thinks, another name for the Norse Odinn. There is not much in that; and this absence of the slightest allusion to Woden as a god suggests the question — "Whether the Angles, when they came over, worshipped Woden, whether he was ever their god in England before the Danish invasion?" and the further question, "whether any of the tribes north of the Elbe — Danes, Angles, Jutes, or any of the Scandinavians, *at the time of the invasion of England* — worshipped the Heaven under the name of Woden, or even thought of him as one of their ancestor-gods?" I do not think, though I speak with great diffidence, that there is any sure proof of the affirmative, and I think that there is a good deal to be said on the side of the negative. Nevertheless, I put forward the following considerations only as a guess, a conjecture. If they are worth nothing, they may at least amuse the reader.

It is plain enough that Woden (Wuotan) was the name which the tribes of Germany proper came, in process of time, to give to the supreme being. "Wodan," says Paul the Deacon, "qui ab universis Germaniae gentibus ut deus adoratur!" Jonas of Bobbio, Paul's elder countryman, also mentions him — "illi aiunt, deo suo Vodano, se velle litare" — testimonies which, however, belong only to the seventh century. It is

also plain from the Abjuration of idolatry and declaration of faith imposed by Boniface on his converts in Thuringia that Woden was worshipped in these forest regions in the eighth century. Here is the phrase in the Abrenuntiatio: "I forsake all works and words of the devil, the worship of groves, Woden and Saxnote, and all evil spirits that are their companions." None, however, of these and kindred passages proves that in the fifth century the English worshipped him as God; or that even when Boniface was writing in the eighth century, Woden was remembered as an English god by the Englishmen with whom Boniface corresponded. It is most probable, I think, that the central German tribes did worship Woden as their tribal deity in the fifth century, and if so, he would have been known as such to the Saxons who came to England; but the Wessex genealogy which goes back to Sceaf through Woden does not suggest that Woden was supreme in the West Saxon mind, and Æthelweard, himself a West Saxon, knows nothing of his godhead. Even if those Saxons who came to England from the inland of Saxony worshipped him as an ancestor, it does not prove that the Angles did so; and all the vernacular literature we have before Ælfred is Angle. In that literature there is not a trace of Woden-worship. Whatever we may say then of a certain element of Woden-worship existing among some of the Saxon invaders, it may be conjectured that this worship had not extended northward among the Angles, Jutes, or Danes at the time of the English migration. After their departure, and a good time after it, I conjecture that Woden-worship got to the North, seized on the Danes, on Sweden and Norway; and I have often thought that the late legend of Woden's wandering from the East and taking refuge in the North contains in it some faint record of this Northern drift of his worship.

These are the matters I think probable. After all, it is only an inference that Woden was the English god, and an inference based on somewhat shadowy arguments. If we do not make that inference, much which is strange in the silence concerning Woden in Anglo-Saxon literature is explicable. Have we any right to make it at all? That is the question.

There is the argument for Woden's worship derived from the place-names in England compounded with his name, a number of which, more or less certain, are given by Kemble;[1] and from the trees, stones, and posts which in the charters bear traces of his name. But this is no proof of his worship, unless we first assume that he was worshipped. Those names may have been given by the Danes; and those which existed before the Danish invasion only prove that Woden was a name known to the English as one of their ancestors, or as one of the heroes of their kinsmen — and this nobody denies — but not that he was believed to be the supreme god. Place-names only prove that the name they take was famous.

Secondly, the mention of Woden as a god occurs in Anglo-Saxon poetry and prose. In every case this mention of his divinity is confined to writings which are subsequent to the invasion of the Danes, a time when it is plain that Woden-worship had become extensive; and when English writers would not hesitate, for the sake of clearness, to give his name to the supreme being whom their ancestors worshipped as the Heaven. We see this custom fully carried out in the Norman chroniclers who, one and

[1] *Saxons in England*, vol. i. p. 344, etc. The whole question of Woden's worship in England is debated in those pages, and what does it come to?

all, call the English god by the name of Woden. But we do not see it done by the Latin writers before the Conquest, as I shall afterwards make clear.

To return however to the poetry, Woden's name is mentioned in one of the *Gnomic Verses: Woden worhte weos; wuldor-alwalda rume roderas* — "Woden made altars, but the glorious Allwielder the spacious skies"; but I suppose no one will maintain that this is one of the early sentences in that various collection. He is also mentioned by Homilists after Ælfred; and in one metrical homily Mercury is said to have been honourable among all the heathen, "and to be called Odinn in Danish," but the identification of Mercury with Woden,[1] whether here or in the Norman chroniclers, does not prove that the English worshipped him before they were Christians. It only proves that when the homily was made, and the *Chronicles* written, Woden was considered as the supreme god of the pagans, and this is not denied.

When we look however, and this is a third point, at earlier writings, at Nennius, at Baeda, at the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, even at the Chronicle of Æthelweard in the tenth century — that is, when we consider writings nearer to the times of English heathendom — we find nothing which should make us suppose that the English pagans adored Woden as their great god. I take Æthelweard first. He wrote after Woden-worship had certainly entered into England with the Danes; and he knew that the *Chronicle*, from which he took his history, looked on Woden as one of the ancestors of the English kings. It seems almost impossible, if he was aware that the English had once worshipped Woden as the supreme god, or as a god at all, that he should speak as he does. "Woden was king," he says, "of a multitude of barbarians. But the unbelievers of the North are overwhelmed with so great a delusion that they even now worship him as a god — the Danes, the Northmen, and the Suevi." "Hengist and Horsa," he says again, "were the *nepotes*" — he means the descendants, for, according to his own genealogy of them, they were the great-great-grandsons of Woden — "of Woden, king of the barbarians, quem post, infanda dignitate, ut deum honorantes, sacrificium obtulerunt pagani, victoriae causa sive virtutis." And again — "Woden, king of the barbarians, whom some pagans now still worship as a god" (Books i., ii.). No doubt a Christian chronicler of the tenth century would be glad to leave out Woden's name, but, having used it, the way in which the

[1] The Mercury of Tacitus has been identified with Woden, but if the identification be correct, it is evidence that the dwellers in Germania worshipped him, but not that his worship went north of the Elbe. When Tacitus comes to speak of the divine ancestors of the Germans, he speaks of them under their native names, ancient grayhaired personages — Tuisco, Mannus — ancestral gods, and when he gets more north, the worship of Nerthus swallows up the rest. She is Mother Earth, and is the only divine Being of whom we have any direct evidence in Anglo-Saxon literature. Whether in the line *Erce, Erce, Erce, eorþan modor*, mother of Earth — we have a goddess who is an older Being even than Earth herself, we cannot tell, but at least the phrase suggests a primeval deity older far than Woden. Moreover, there is a kind of bidding prayer for or to the Earth in the same Charm in which the enigmatic *Erce* occurs — "Hale be Thou, Earth, mother of men!" *Hal wes þu, folde, fira modor*; but I doubt whether this is more than the conventional phrase of a farmer. "Earth, be in good fettle for me" — and the *fira modor*, may also be a mere phrase, and have nothing to do with any conception of the Earth as divine.

phrases about him are put is not the way in which a writer would naturally speak who was aware that in old times Woden was the supreme god of his folk. He knows Woden as one of the ancestors of the English kings, whose worship in after years became prevalent among the Northerns. And this is the very thing I conjecture to be true.

Now as Æthelweard is of the tenth, so the book compiled under the name of Nennius is probably of the eighth century. Its materials were then gathered when the traditions of the English heathendom were fresher than in the tenth century, and before the Danish invasion. What does Nennius say? Does this book know anything about Woden's deity? Nothing at all! It speaks of Woden as one of the ancestors of Hengest and Horsa, but when it comes to talk of the god of the invaders, it is of Geat and his divine father it tells, — "Geat, who, *as they say*, was the son of a god." I have italicised *as they say*, because this phrase gives the quotation about Geat an importance it would not have otherwise had in so loose and corrupt a compilation as Nennius. It marks this passage as one of those he collected "de scriptis Scotorum Anglorumque, et ex traditione veterum nostrorum;" from the ancient registers of our history from which Baeda also learned the facts of the English story before the entrance of Christianity — "ex priorum maxime scriptis, hic inde collectis." It is Dr. Guest,[1] who says that when Baeda states a fact on the apparent authority of these ancient chronicles, he sometimes adds, "ut perhibent," "perhibetur;" and the phrase "as they say," used here in this book of Nennius, isolates into importance the statement about Geat.

Asser seems to take up the same view. In his history of Ælfred Woden is not an English god. He is the great-great-great-great-grandson of "Geat whom the pagans long worshipped as a god." Geat, who is in Nennius the son of a god, is here a god of the English — the ancestor god, as I should say, of the Geatas, just as Taetwa, Beaw, Sceldi — who are the father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of Geat in the Wessex genealogy — may be ancestor gods of other Northern tribes who one by one separated from the original tribe ruled by Sceaf from whom they all descended. But, leaving this aside, it is at least a little curious that neither Asser nor Nennius, who founded their special statement about the English god on ancient documents, knew anything at all about Woden as an English deity.

Now take Baeda; does he seem to be aware of Woden's importance? When he does mention two of the goddesses of his heathen ancestors, Rheda and Eostra, he is wholly silent about him who is declared by so many to have been the supreme god of the English. When, on the other hand, he does speak of Woden, it is not as a god, but as the ancestor of English kings. "Hengest and Horsa," he says, "were the sons of Victgilsus, whose father was Vecta, son of Woden, from whose stock the royal race of many provinces deduce their original."

Baeda got this, no doubt, from the same ancient sources from which the similar entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is derived, and I appeal now to the witness of the *Chronicle*. "From this Woden," it says (adding, however, one generation more than Baeda contains to Hengest's descent from Woden), "sprang all our royal" (*i.e.* West Saxon) "families and those of the South-humbrians also." A little farther on and the Northumbrian princes are also traced back to Woden, and afterwards the

[1] *Origines Celticæ*, vol. ii. pp. 157–163.

Mercians Penda and Offa. But nothing that the *Chronicle* or Baeda says would suggest to their readers that Woden was a god of the English, much less their supreme god. This might, however, be a possible inference if the other full genealogies in the *Chronicle* ended with Woden, but this is not the case. The complete genealogies given in the *Chronicle* of 855 or 891 are those of the Northumbrian, Mercian, and West Saxon princes. The two Mercian genealogies, those of Penda and Offa, go back to Woden, and no farther. The two Northumbrian genealogies, those of Ida and Ælla, both go back to Woden, but in Ida's genealogy, Woden has five ancestors, the last of whom is Geat, and in Ælla's genealogy, Woden has one ancestor, Friduwulf. The Wessex genealogy, made either after Æthelwulf's death or in Ælfred's reign, goes back beyond Woden for twelve generations to Sceaf. The genealogies are also, with differences, given in Nennius, Asser, and Æthelweard during Anglo-Saxon times, and they attribute many ancestors to Woden. Many of the Norman chroniclers give them also; and Woden never closes their lists. He has, variously, four, eight, or even sixteen ancestors. Generally speaking, Sceaf is the oldest heathen name in any of the pedigrees. It is so in the Wessex genealogy, which, for many reasons, may be looked on, as Grimm allows, "to be the complete and correct thing." It is so, also, in Æthelweard, who repeats the *Chronicle*, but was also a special authority on this matter, for he was of the house of Ælfred, and knew his own lineage. Except in Mercia then (in, that is, the full genealogies, for there are several incomplete ones which only go back to Woden), Woden does not take the closing place; and though in the *Chronicle* he does close the Mercian line, he does not close it in the Mercian genealogy of Matthew of Westminster, who gives thirteen ancestors to the Woden of Mercia. Woden's position then is not of first-rate importance in the genealogies. He is one only of a host of ancestors. Had he been the supreme god of the English, he would, I conjecture, have been more isolated. Nor, if we take the generations which lead up to him from Cerdic, in the Wessex genealogy, does he get back into any remote antiquity. Cerdic died in 534. Woden precedes him by nine generations, which (if we give thirty years to a generation) proves that the West Saxons thought that he lived in the midst of the third century — not a very ancient lineage for their supreme being! In fact, if we are to take the genealogies as any evidence of the way in which the English thought of Woden, it is difficult to give Woden any other place than that of an ancestor, whose force and heroism had made him important. A nation would scarcely imagine that their supreme god had twelve or fourteen ancestors. Of course, the lists have no backward historical value beyond the names of Cerdic, Ida, or Penda, but they have a value as showing how the English thought about personages like Woden or Sceaf. They do show that Woden did not occupy a supreme position in their minds.[1]

[1] Grimm, who is somewhat collared by his belief that Woden was the name of the god whom all the Teutonic races adored as supreme and naturally identifies him with the Mercury of Tacitus, declares that because Woden is in the centre (which he is not always) of the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, his preeminence is evident. This is a curious argument.

Troubled too with the statement that the English worshipped Geat, he says that Geat is another name for Woden. This is mere assertion. Geat was probably the semi-divine tribal father of the Geatas, and worshipped as such by the tribe and its emigrants; and Wuotan, as it seems to me, occupied the

If we are to choose any name as of first-rate importance in the English mind, not as a great god like Heaven or Earth, but as an ancestral divine Person, the name we ought to choose is Sceaf — the father of the Scyld of *Beowulf* — the name of the boy who came out of the deep to Scania, and became, in the myth, king of all the folk round about Sleswick. And, independent of the story told of him by three of the Norman chroniclers, we have the best witness to his importance in the West Saxon genealogy given in the *Chronicle*, and in the pre-eminence which his story takes in Æthelweard. It is scarcely possible to doubt but that Ælfred himself drew up or carefully superintended the account of the West Saxon lineage in the *Chronicle*. We have, if this was the case, his own view, in the genealogy, of the question, Who was the root, the founder, the remotest ancestor of the West Saxon folk, and indeed of all the English; for the place Ælfred elsewhere brings the English people from is the very place where this remote ancestor was said by tradition to have set up his capital town, Sleswick, which the Danes called Haithaby. This primeval ancestor of the English, according to Ælfred, was Sceaf. (The derivation of Sceaf from Noah, and so from Adam, has plainly nothing to do with the question.) Through twelve generations then, anterior to Woden, Ælfred looked back to his origins. Moreover, it seems also pretty plain that Ælfred knew of the legend of Sceaf, though he took care not to introduce such a matter into the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The legend is told by Æthelweard, and with remarks attached which, considering who Æthelweard was, force us to believe that the house of Ælfred knew the tale. Æthelweard was extremely particular about his lineage, and he wrote his *Chronicle* not only to tell his cousin Matilda the story of the English in England (it is taken chiefly from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), but also, as he says, to make her thoroughly acquainted "with the origin of our family, who were our relations, and how and where they came from, as far as our memory can go, and as our parents taught us." He and his cousin were both of the royal West Saxon line. Æthelred, son of Æthelwulf, and brother of Ælfred, was his direct ancestor, and Ælfred himself was the direct ancestor of his cousin Matilda. Being thus connected with the West Saxon kings, and himself an eager genealogist, he would be sure to preserve carefully the views held by his ancestors as to their origin, and we hear from him — and the testimony is of worth — that Æthelwulf, Ælfred's father, traced his descent to Sceaf, as we infer from the *Chronicle* that Ælfred also did. There is then, I think, clear evidence that the West Saxon House — and

same position among the Central German tribes, and especially, I conjecture, among the Franks, whose great influence would tend to make the name of their tribal deity the name of the supreme god, and send his worship all over the Teutonic peoples, but not till long after the English migration.

A memory, a tradition, of these different tribal worships lingers in the phrase used in the St. Olaf Saga — "Thor is the God of the Englishmen, Odinn of the Saxons, Skiold of the Scanians, and Freyr of the Swedes." "I wonder," says Grimm, "why the writer gives Thor to the English, who were votaries of Woden." He may well wonder why.

As to the names of the days of the week which are alleged as proving the English worship of Woden and the rest, these names were made long after the English migration, and prove nothing at all as to whom the English worshipped before Christianity. "Their very forms," Vigfusson and Powell say, "prove them to be loan words." — *C. P. B.*, vol. i. p. 428.

at the time of its greatest importance, when it would be most jealous of its ancestry, from the time of Æthelwulf to that of Eadgar — held that Woden was but one in a long series of their ancestors, and that Sceaf was their most ancient and venerable father. Here is the passage in Æthelweard. He has brought King Æthelwulf back through Ina and Kenred to Cerdic, and Cerdic through eight generations to Woden — "And Woden was son of Frithowald, son of Frealaf, son of Frithuwulf, son of Finn, son of Godwulf, son of Geat, son of Taetwa, son of Beaw, son of Sceldi, son of Sceaf. This Sceaf came with one bark to an island of the ocean, named Scani; surrounded with arms, and he was a young boy, and unknown to the people of that land; but he was received by them, and they guarded him as their own with much care, and afterwards chose him for their king. *It is from him that King Æthelwulf derives his descent.*" If we are to choose then the oldest ancestor-god of all the English tribes, the one whom the consistent English tradition lodges in Sleswick whence Ælfred derives the original English; if we are to select the mythical ancestor, through Cerdic, of our own Royal House, we look back beyond Geat or Beaw or the rest (who may have been worshipped by separate tribes), and far beyond Woden, in a straight line to Sceaf, who, fatherless, motherless, came out of the mists of myth, out of the unknown deep, out of the secret hiding-places of the gods, to Scania; and whose story — inserted into the poem of Beowulf — we possess under the name of his son Scyld, in perhaps the most ancient song in the English language.

I put forward these considerations with no impertinent assertion. They are no more than a conjecture which seems to have enough support to render it perhaps worthy of being called a theory. They are considerations which account for the silence of early English literature on the gods who have been transferred to the English from the later Viking creed, and whom Kemble and others discover hidden away like shadows in allusive words and phrases. They mean to suggest that the worship of Woden as the supreme being had not reached the older England of the mainland at the time of the migration; that it did not get into the lands about the mouth of Elbe, or into Denmark and Sweden until a good time after the fifth century; that then it did drift northward and seized on the Danes, and was brought by them to England; that the Vikings took it up, mingled it up with Christian myths, and sent it over other regions of Europe than Germany; and that then Woden's name became of so much importance that writers in England transferred it backwards to the supreme god whom the pagan English worshipped, but that the pagan English did not use that name for their god. Woden was no more to them than one of the heroic ancestors of their kings.

I repeat that this is only a suggestion; but that the religion of our fathers was a simple and homely affair, and had nothing to do with the complicated theology of the Norsemen, is not a theory. It was a nature-worship of father Heaven, and mother Earth, and of their benignant summer children, and to these we may perhaps add a war-god of some kind. Underneath these deities there were semi-divine ancestors of the folk who were worshipped, and each family had probably their own household spirits as well. The rites of these worships were conducted partly in the households, and partly in temples belonging to the tribe or the royal house, and without idols. Below these venerable personages, reverence, founded on fear, was given to the destroying and dark powers

of nature, embodied as giants, elves, and monsters, and also to the elements, places, and things in which the gods, the ancestors, and the lower order of beings were supposed to take up their dwelling — the air, the fire, the great water, the burial barrows and howes, the hills, the islands in the river, the groves, the great trees, the wells, the ancient pillars of stone they found on plain or moor.[1] Around these latter things, and round the evil forces of nature, superstitions, evil and innocent, gathered; but the foundation of the religion — the worship of the semi-divine spirits of the forefathers of the tribe or the family, and of the great nature-deities from whom they sprang — was at once homely and noble, reverent and simple. I may add that this simplicity of religion would account for the comparative ease with which Christianity was introduced among the English, and for the wisdom and tolerance with which, for example, Æthelberht and Eadwine considered and carried out the change of religion.

E. — (CHAPTER IX)

THE CHARMS

The *Charms*, of which some are here given, were kept in the mouths of the people, and, after the introduction of Christianity, their heathen elements were modified by Christian elements. They are like an ill-rubbed Palimpsest. The old writing continually appears from under the new; the new is blurred by the old, and the old by the new. Sometimes they both mingle into the strangest jumble, in which the heathen superstitions have Christian clothing, and the Christian heathen. This is true concerning the charms mentioned in the chapter on the *Settlement*. Those which follow here are more decidedly Christian, and are partly prose and partly verse. I translate such portions of them as have some poetical value. They have the literary interest which belongs to rude folk-rhymes. The first is the *Nine Herbs' Charm*. In Sweden nine sorts of flowers made the midsummer nosegay for a maiden to sleep and dream upon. Nine is the mystic number (rather three or a multiple of it) which is most popular in Britain, but of course this is not peculiar to Britain. The charm starts with the Mugwort —[2]

[1] I am sorry that some of this has been already said in the chapter to which this note is attached, but the repetition seems to be necessary in this place.

[2] The Mugwort is the Artemisia, the German *beifuss*. The tradition that whoso wears it does not weary on the way comes down from Pliny. But among all German tribes it is good in a house against fiends and diseases, "against poison and flying things," that is, fevers; and "against the loathly things that fare through the land," that is, against witches and their congeners. Grimm quotes a Galloway song which a mermaid sings to the sorrowful relations of a girl dying with consumption —

> Wad ye let the bonnie May die i' your hand
> And the Mugwort flowering in the land!

As to the "loathly things," compare Grimm's quotation, which is too amusing to leave out, and illustrates the transference of disease: "God the Lord went over the land and there met him 70 sorts of Gouts and Goutesses. Then spake the Lord, Ye 70 Gouts and Goutesses, whither would ye? Then spake the 70 Gouts and Goutesses, We go over land and take from men their health and limbs. Then spake the Lord, Ye shall go to an elder bush and break off all his boughs and leave unto this man his straight limbs."

Remember thou, Mugwort, what thou declaredst,
What thou preparedst at the great declaration!
Thou art called Una, oldest of worts,
Thou hast might against three, and also 'gainst thirty;
Thou hast might against poison, and against flying things,
And against the loathly ones which through the land are faring.
Thou, too, Waybroad,[1] mother of worts,
Open to Eastward, inwardly mighty,
O'er thee ran the Chariots, over thee queens rode,
O'er thee Brides have brided, o'er thee bulls have panted;
All hast thou withstounded, all hast thou withstood,
As thou now withstandest venom and the ills that fly,
And the loathly kin that o'er the land are faring.

The next four lines are full of questions for critics. The lines which follow, and which have more interest, belong to the plant which is afterwards named *Attorlaδ* —

This is here the wort that against the Worm fought,
This has power 'gainst the poison, it prevails 'gainst flying ill;
It prevails o'er loathly things that the land are faring through!
Flee thee, Attorlath, less flee from the greater,
Greater from the less, till a boot from both arrive.
Thou, remember, Mayweed, what thou didst declare,
What thou didst end up, at Alorforda.[2]
So that ne'er for flying ill was there life e'er taken,
Since a man did make Mayweed to himself for meat.

The next herb, *Wergulu*, does business which is very curious —

This is the wort that is Wergulu called;
This sent the seal o'er the ridge of the sea,
Of other poison to better the hurt.

Then some strange lines occur about Woden, concerning which I have nothing to say except that they seem to put the charm forward into times after the Danish invasion. The *wuldor-tanas*, the "magic-twigs," sound far more Norse than English —

These nine herbs did work nine poisons against.
A worm came sneaking, and with teeth tore the man!
Then Woden in hand took nine wonder-twigs;
There he slew the adder, that it flew in pieces nine.

[1] Waybroad — the *plantago* — (A.-S. *wegbraede*; German, *wegerich*, *wegewarte*) has its Latin name from being exposed to the tread (*plantae*) of passengers, and its English name from growing on the wayside. I wonder if the legend Grimm speaks of (chapter on Herbs) — of the herb being once a maiden that awaited her lover by the wayside — has anything to do with the strange lines 9 and 10?

[2] What she did at Alorforda and what Alorforda is, it is almost too distressing not to know. Cockayne says there is an Alderford in Norfolk?

There are three charms to bring back lost or stolen cattle, one of which I have already used. The other two are almost identical, and contain each three verses —

Bethelehem the Burg was hight, where was born the Christ,
It is famous far over all the middle Earth!
So this deed be known in the sight of men.

"*Per crucem Christi.* So pray three times to the East, and say thrice, 'May the cross of Christ bring it back from the East;' then to the West and say, 'May the cross of Christ bring it back from the West;' and to the South, etc.; and to the North and say, 'The cross of Christ was hidden, and has been found.' The Jews hanged Christ; they did the worst of deeds to him. They hid what they could not hide; so may this deed never be hidden. *Per crucem Christi.*" This is curious enough, but the next is more curious. "If cattle be privily taken away; if it be a horse, sing this over his foot-shackles or over his bridle; if it be another kind of cattle, sing over the hoof-track, and light three candles and drip the wax three times into the hoof-track. No man will be able to conceal it," *i.e.* the stealing.[1]

The next three are, like that against the Stitch, against illness. The first is against the *Dweorh*, that is, "against the Dwarf" (or we may read *Weorh* — a warty eruption). If it be the Dwarf,[2] this charm takes us into heathendom. The Dwarf's breath and touch may bring sickness and death. Cattle bewitched in Norway are *dverg-slagen*. Blowing, puffing beings they are, wind spirits of harm, full of mischief, who tangle the hair in knots (Grimm, chapter on Dwarfs). They were thought by the English to tangle the body in knots, to be the source of agues, of convulsions, of all diseases which seem to leap suddenly on a man. Or they took possession of the body and went roving about therein.

"One must take seven little wafers, such as one offers with, and write these names on each wafer — Maximianus, Malchus, Johannes, Martinianus, Dionysius, Constantinus, Serapion; then must one afterwards sing the charm hereafter mentioned, first into the left ear, then into the right, then above the man's head. Then let a maiden go *and hang it on his neck*, and let one do this for three days: he will soon be better."

[1] This belongs to the sphere of the ancient superstition that the footprints were so far bound up with the man or animal that made them that an injury done to them is transferred to the man, or that some meddling with the spoor of an animal detains it. The Australian blacks put hot embers in the track of the hunted beast; the Ojibway Indians place "medicine" on the prints of the deer and bear, supposing that this will bring them within reach. The Zulus (and this is a curiously close parallel to the text) resort to a similar device *to recover strayed cattle*. Earth, taken from the footprints of the missing beasts, is placed in the chief's vessel, etc. Then the chief says: "I have now conquered them. These cattle are now here. I am sitting upon them. *I know not how they will escape.*" — Frazer, "Popular Superstitions of the Ancients," *Folk-Lore*, vol. 1.

[2] Every one knows that in all folk medicine the most frequent source of disease is the anger or the mischief of an external spirit; and the several diseases had each their own spirit. Grimm quotes a Finnish Song which condenses this opinion: "Einen alten Frau neun knaben geboren werden: werwolf, schlange, risi? eidechse, nachtmar, gliedschmerz, gichtschmerz, milzstechen, bauchgrimmen."

Here a spider wight came a-ganging in,
He his hands had laid hard upon his belly.
Quoth he then that thou now his Haencgest wert;
Lay thyself against his neck.
Now began they then off the land to sail.
And as soon as they came off the land they began to cool;
Then came in a wild beast's sister — then she ended all,
And she swore her oaths that never this should harm the sick,
Neither him who could of this charm get hold,
Nor the man who knew how this charm to sing.[1]
Amen. *Fiat.*

The charm for a pregnant woman which follows is full of folk fancies, but none of them, save the allusion to the fairy changeling, has more than a passing interest. And the charm against a Wen[2] is another instance of the transference of the disease to some inanimate object, and the passing away of the disease as the object decays.

The last charm of importance is that sung on departing for a journey. Many of the lines have an air of antiquity, but even these, as the whole body of the poem, are Christian or have been made so. The *gyrd*, the rod of the beginning, and its works of defence, is very like an ancient rune-stick, and the phrases *sige-gealdor* ("a victorious charm"), *sige-gyrd* ("a victorious rod"), seem to me also heathen. So also the evils from which the charm guards the traveller belong to the indefinite terrors of heathendom, the nameless horrors of elves and wandering sprites and gangers of the night, or of the bloodthirsty river-spirits that spring upon the traveller. Here is the Spell —

In this rod I guard myself, and to God's grace trust myself,
'Gainst the stitch that sore is, and against the sore blow,
And against the grim, 'gainst the grisly terror,
And against the mickle horror that to every one is loathly;

[1] The verses from 5 to the end read like a nonsense song, like the wise men who went to sea in a sieve. *Haencgest* appears nowhere else. Cockayne translates it "hackney."

The spider is imprisoned in a bag and hung around the swollen part. This is a common form of cure.

> Only beware of the fever, my friends! Beware of the fever!
> For it is not, like that of our cold Acadian climate,
> Cured by wearing a spider hung round one's neck in a nutshell.
> *Evangeline.*

Elias Ashmole, May 11, 1681, writes in his diary: "I took early in the morning a good dose of elixir, and hung 3 spiders about my neck, and they drove my ague away. *Deo gratias!*" In Worcestershire the same remedy is good for toothache. In Norfolk a spider, tied up in muslin and pinned over the mantelpiece, is good for whooping-cough. When the spider dies the cough will go. It is inferred from these instances either that the spider, being poisonous, is supposed to draw the poison of the swelling into itself, or, which is most likely, the disease is transferred to the spider and dies with the spider. Toads are often used in the same way.

[2] It is given in full by Mr. de Grey Birch who discovered it, in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, vol. xi. p. 29.

And 'gainst all the loathly things that into the land may come!
A victorious spell I sing, a victorious staff I bear,
Word of victory, work of victory, so may this avail me!
May no spirit mar me nor the mighty man afflict me.

Then he calls on the Trinity to keep him hale; on holy men and women and the angels to guard him against the fiends, to keep him in peace, to give him the hope of glory of the hall of Heaven!

Matthew be my helm, Mark my byrnie be;
Of my life the shining strength; let my sword be Luke,
Sharp and edged sheer; and my shield be John.

Winds be smooth and light to me, and in God's peace may I dwell, guarded against the loathly One who my life afflicts.

This seems the place for the *Rune Song*, in which, midst of a general Christian form, many heathen elements appear. Moreover, the Runes themselves have a close connection with charms, spells, and magic.

Each rune is taken — and there are twenty-nine — according to the meaning of the word given to it as name. Two, three, or four lines are given to each subject. The poem is, in fact, a poetical alphabet, like "A was an Archer that shot at a frog; B was a Butcher that kept a big dog." Here, for example, are the first and second runes —

ᚢ Bull is a fierce beast and broad are his horns,
A full-furious deer; and fighteth with horns!
A mighty moor-stepper! 'Tis a high-mooded creature.

ᛁ Ice is over-cold, immeasurably slippy;
Glistens bright as glass, unto gems most like:
'Tis a floor frost-wrought, fair unto the sight.

Most of the verses are of the same type as these. They can scarcely be said to belong to literature. A few, however, which describe natural objects, like hail and the birch-tree, have some poetical feeling. There are one or two, also, which seem to come down from ancient, even heathen times. Of these there are three. The first is the fourth Rune ᚨ Os; the second is the sixteenth Rune ᛋ Sigel; the third is the twenty-second ᛜ Ing.

Os, called in the poem the beginner of all speech, the upholder of wisdom, is not an Anglo-Saxon word. The late editor of the poem did not understand it. Grimm explained it by the Latin *os*. Grein, Rieger, and others make it the equivalent of the Gothic *ans*, and the Northern *as* = "God"; but it is still doubtful whether the word *os*, in the sense of God, ever occurs independently. If it have that meaning the verse is heathen, and the editor did not understand it — a supposition which puts the Christian redaction of the poem forward to a late period.

The same kind of mistake seems made about *sigel*. Sigel is used metaphorically for the sun. But the editor of the verse uses it as if it were *segel*, a "sail."

These two errors induce the critics to conjecture that this was an old Northern alphabet of Runes with explanations, probably Danish; and that it was translated and greatly changed by an Anglo-Saxon in the eleventh or twelfth century.

A verse, the 22nd, on the Rune *Ing* is much more clearly ancient. "Ing" is the divine ancestor of the Ingaevones, one of the names of the many-named hero from whom the Northern tribes of Scandia and Angeln sprang. The verse is the only one in the whole poem that seems to belong purely to the original document —

Ing was the first amid the East Danes,
Of heroes beheld, till Eastward he then
Went over the wave; his wain followed him!
Thus by the Heardings this hero was named.[1]

In the explanation of this given by Grimm, *Ing* and the *Wain* (a distinctive mark, he says, of ancient gods, heroes, and kings) are mixed up with the Norse gods. Ten Brink says the chariot was the emblem of the god Ing, or Frea, as well as of the goddess Nerthus. But the passage puzzles them, and their explanation is vague. V. Rydberg, in his *Teutonic Mythology* (English translation, p. 180), claims to have solved the difficulty, and he makes the *waen* of the third line not a waggon, but the proper name of the hero Vagn, Hadding's giant foster-father, who is also called Vagnhofde. He is so called by the Haddings, the Heardings of the Anglo-Saxon text. The lines will now read, and the difference is great —

Ing was first seen among the East Danemen;
Then he betook himself eastward over the sea.
Vagn hastened to follow;
Thus the Heardings called this hero.

This strophe then is said to enshrine an episode in the first Northern Epic, broken fragments of which only remain scattered here and there in Sagas, the epic of the "first great war in the world," as it is called by the seeress in Volospa.

That mythic war began between the Asas and the Vans, the two great god-clans, and had its counterpart in a war between the three great Teutonic races, but the main contest is between Ing (Yngwe or Swiþdaeg) and Hearding (Hadding). In this contest, as in the Trojan war, the gods join. All the Vans who had now driven the Asas into exile favour Ing, but Odin, Thor, and Heimdal are on the side of Hadding. In his early youth Hadding has been carried to Jötunheim by Thor, and brought up there by Vagnhofde, one of the giants; and during his stay is saved again from great danger by Odin himself, who rides away with him over sea and land on Sleipnir. When he grows up he becomes the chief of the tribes of Eastern Teutondom, and makes war on the tribes of Northern and Western Teutondom. Ing comes forth from Asgard on the Scandian peninsula, and calls on all the dwellers and on the Danes to follow him against the Eastern Teutons over the sea. "Ing was first seen among

[1] I insert the Anglo-Saxon —

ᛝ (Ing) waes aerest mid East denum
gesewen secgun, oþ he siððan est
ofer waeg gewat, waen aefter ran!
ðus Heardingas ðone haele nemdun.

Rune Song, ll. 67–70.

the East Danemen, and then went eastward over the wave." The Danes and Swedes thus go across the Baltic with Ing to the seat of war. A great battle takes place with Hadding, and Hadding is on the point of perishing, when Odin suddenly brings Vagnhofde to Hadding's help, and places him in the battle beside his foster-son. This is expressed in the Rune strophe by the phrase "Vagn made haste to follow. So the Heardings (the followers of Hadding) called the hero." Hadding, all the same, is utterly defeated.

This is V. Rydberg's explanation, and, if we may accept his upbuilding of the myth out of Saxo and the Northern Sagas, it sounds well, and is a literary curiosity. It is as strange to find this single verse lost as it were in an Anglo-Saxon poem, and referring to a mythic epic which concerns the Teutons, as it is to find the equally ancient piece about Scyld in the beginning of *Beowulf*.

NOTES

A. — (CHAPTER XXII)

THE "WANDERER" AND THE "SEAFARER" IN BLANK VERSE

The Prologue

A lonely man full often finds his grace,
God's tender pity: though in care of mind
Need drive him many days o'er ocean's path
To push with hands the frost-cold sea, and sail
The exile-tracks! O Wyrd is fully wrought!
Thus quoth a Wanderer, mindful of his woes,
Of direful slaughters, and of kinsman's death.

THE WANDERER

"Oft must I, lonely, at each early dawn
Bewail my care. There's not one living man
To whom I now dare tell my hidden heart
With open freedom — O full well I know,
It is a noble habit in an earl,
To lock the cupboard of his soul, and safe
Keep his thought-hoard, while, as he will, he thinks.
A wearied mind may not withstand the Wyrd,
Nor any troubled spirit plan its aid;
Wherefore those eager for their Honour bind,
Close-locked within the coffer of their breast,
Their dreary thought — and so must I tie up
My soul in fetters; I, so poor, careworn,
Cut off from home, from all my kinsman far,
Since, long, long years ago, the dark of earth
Wrapt my Gold-friend; and I have ever since
Gone winter-woeful o'er the woven seas!
Sad then, I sought a treasure-giver's hall,
Where I might find, or far or near, some Lord,
Who in the mead-hall would my memory know,
Or will to comfort me a friendless man,
Or pleasure me with joys!
Who tries it, knows
How cruel sorrow for a comrade is
To him who few of loved fore-standers has!

He holds the exile's path, not plaited gold ;
A frozen bosom, not the fruits of earth !
He minds him of the hall, of heroes there,
Of taking gifts, and how his golden friend
Feasted his youth. Fallen, fallen is all that joy !
O well he knows this, who must long forego
The wise redes of his loved, his friendly Lord,
But most when sleep and sorrow, both at one,
Bind up the poor, the lonely wanderer's soul !
Him dreameth then that he doth clip and kiss
His Man-lord, and together head and hands
Lay on his knee, as once, when at his will,
In days gone by the Gift-stool he enjoyed.
Then doth the friendless man awake again,
And sees before him heave the fallow waves,
The foam-birds bathe, and broaden out their wings,
And falling sleet and snow, shot through with hail :
Then all the heavier is his wound of heart,
Sore for its own, and sorrow is renewed.
In dreams, his kinsmen flit across his mind,
With songs he greets them, glad, he watches them ;
But these heroic comrades swim away !
The ghost of these air-floaters brings to him
Few well-known words ! Once more his grief is new,
Who now must send, again and yet again,
His weary spirit o'er the binding seas !
So in this world I may not understand
Wherefore my mind does not grow black as night,
Whene'er I think all on the life of men,
How suddenly they gave their house-floor up,
These mighty-mooded Thegns ! Thus doth Mid-Garth,
Day after day, droop down and fall to nought.
Wherefore no man is wise, till he has owned
His share of years on earth ! The wise must be
Patient, not too hot-hearted, nor of words
Too quick, nor heedless, nor too weak in war,
Too fearful, or too fain, nor yet of goods
Too greedy, nor too keen to boast, until
He know his way ! A man must wait, whene'er
He make a vow, till, bold, he surely know
Whither will turn the thought within his heart.
Grave men should feel how phantom-like it is,
When all this world's weal stands awaste ; as now,
Unnumbered, o'er this land, are ruined towns,
Swept by the storm, thick covered by white frost,
Dismantled all their courtyards, and the Hall
Where wine was drunk, in dust ! Low lies its Lord,
Bereft of joy ; and all the peers have fallen,
Haughty, before the rampart. War seized some
And bore them on death-paths ; and one a ship
Took o'er the towering wave ! The hoary wolf
Another tore when dead ; and one an earl
Hid in the hollowed earth with dreary face.

So hath men's Maker wasted this Earth's home,
Until the work of elder giants stood
Void of its Burghers, all bereft of joys!
Who wisely has thought o'er this ruined Stead,
And this dark life doth deeply muse upon;—
Gray-haired in soul — in exile oft recalls
Uncounted slaughters, and this Word cries out —
'Where went the horse, where went the Man? Where went the Treasure-giver?
Where have the seats of feasting gone? and where the joys in hall?
Alas, the beaker bright! alas, the byrnied warrior!
Alas, the people's pride! O how is fled that time,
Beneath the Night-helm gloomed, as if it ne'er had been.
Alone is left, to tell of those loved peers,
This wall huge-high, spotted with carven snakes!
The strength of ashen spears took off the earls,
Blood-thirsty weapons, and the far-famed Wyrd!
Lo! these hewn cliffs are beaten by the storms,
The snow-drift driving down binds up the earth,
Winter's wild terror, when it cometh wan!
Night's shadow blackens, sending from the North
Fierce slants of hail for harmfulness to men!
Wyrd's dooming changes all beneath the heaven;
Here fleets our wealth, and here is fleeting friend,
Here fleets the kinsman, here is fleeting man;
The roots of all this earth are idle made.'"

Epilogue

So quoth the Wise of mood! Apart
He sat, and made his runes.
Who keeps his troth, is brave of soul,
Nor shall he, over-rash,
Ever give voice to woe of heart
Till first its cure he knows;
So acts a man of fortitude!
Yet, well for him who seeks
Strength, mercy from the Father, where
Our fortress standeth sure.

THE SEAFARER

The Old Sailor —
Sooth is the song that I shall sing, and tell
Of sailing on the sea! O, oft have I
Endured in woeful days the painful hours,
And bitter care of heart have borne, and known
Unnumbered seats of sorrow in my ship!
Fearful the weltering waves, when 'twas my part
Strait watch to keep at night upon the prow,
When onward drove my bark beside the cliffs.
Frost pinched my feet fettered with clamps of ice;

But hot about my heart was sighing Care,
And Hunger took my fortitude from me, —
Sea-wearied me! O little knows the man
To whom it haps most happily on earth,
How, carked with care, on frozen seas I lived
Dark Winter through upon a Wanderer's ways;
Forlorn of joys, of kinsmen loved bereft,
Icicle-hung, while flew the hail in showers!
Nought heard I but the thunder-roar of seas,
Of ice-chilled waves, and whiles, the whooping swan!
The gannet's scream was all the joy I knew,
I heard the seal swough 'stead of mirth of men;
And for mead-drinking heard the sea-mew cry!
The storm-winds lashed the crags, the ocean-tern
Answered them, icy-plumed; and oft the Earn,
Her wet wings dripping rain, barked her reply.
. . . O none of kinsfolk then
Might stir to joy my solitary soul!
Wherefore he little thinks, who, in the burgs,
Owns only life's delight and little bale,
Haughty and insolent with wine, how I,
Weary, must on the ocean-paths outstay!
Dark grew Night's shadow; from the North it snowed;
Frost bound the field; hail fell upon the earth,
Coldest of grains!

The Young Sailor —
Why crash together then
Thoughts in my heart that I myself should tempt
The high-tossed seas, the sport of the salt waves?
A lust doth hour by hour prick on my soul,
To set my life sea-faring, and to seek
Far off from hence the shores of outland men.

The Old Sailor —
Lives no man on the earth so proud of heart,
So generous in youth, so good at gifts,
In deeds so daring, to his Lord so dear,
But to the Deep is ever his desire
To find the work his Lord may will for him.
Not for the harp or spending rings his heart;
Woman delights him not, nor yet the world;
Nothing he cares for save the heaving waves;
Whom the Sea urges, longs for evermore!

The Young Sailor —
The trees rebloom; again the burgs grow fair;
Winsome the wide plains, and the earth is gay —
But all doth challenge the impassioned life
Of his brave spirit to sea-voyage, who
Thinks to sail far across the ocean surge.

The Old Sailor —
The cuckoo warns you with his fateful song,
That summer's watchman sings, but woe he bodes,
Bitter the breast within! No happy man,
No hero knows what he must bear, who sets
His exile-wanderings furthest on the sea.

The Young Sailor —
Wherefore my Thought now hovers o'er my heart,
Above the surging flood, the whale's homeland,
My Spirit flies away; and hovers then
Far o'er the lap of earth; and now wings back,
Greedy and hungering, again to me.
That lonely Flier yells, and drives me forth
Across the Whale's path, irresistibly,
Along high-leaping seas; for sweeter far
The joys of God are there than this dead life
That swoons away on land.

B. — (CHAPTER XXIV)

THE SOURCES OF THE "CHRIST"

The extracts from the two Homilies which follow, and the Hymn *De Die Judicii*, are printed from Mr. Gollancz's edition of the *Christ*. Every critic has pointed out these homiletic sources, but Professor Cook (*Modern Language, Notes*, June 1889) was the first, I think, to show that this ancient Latin Hymn was probably used by Cynewulf. I say *probably*, because there must have been, before the eighth century, a great number of Hymns on this subject; and no doubt a similar treatment and similar phrases ran through them all. When it is said, then, that this was one of Cynewulf's sources, we do not mean that Cynewulf used this or that which was not fairly his own. The phrases were common property; every preacher used them. The originality of any poet or preacher consisted, not in the invention of a new treatment of the subject or a new phrase, but in the way he filled up the old treatment, or in the way he turned an old phrase so as to dignify it. Cynewulf has made the things he has taken from the Hymn — if it was this special Hymn which lay before him — quite distinct in manner and feeling. Take the phrase,

Erubescet orbis lunae, sol et obscurabitur
Stellae cadent pallescentes,

As blood shall be the Moones sphere and dark shall grow the Sun;
The stars shall pale their light and fall.

This is the Latin. It may be better, in the opinion of many, than Cynewulf's work; but that is not the point. The point is that Cynewulf has passed it through the furnace of his own imagination, and made it another thing altogether. It is no longer Latin, it is Northumbrian; and it illus-

trates all I have said in the Chapter on the distinctiveness of native Northumbrian poetry. When the Latin traditions did enter Northumbria, they were vitally altered. They lost their Latin note and sounded an English note. Here is the English —

> þonne weorþeð sunne sweart gewended
> On blodes hiw seo ðe beorhte scan
> Ofer aer-worulde aelda bearnum.
> Mona þaet sylfe þe aer mon-cynne
> Nihtes lyhte niþer gehreoseð
> And steorran swa some stredað of heofone
> Þurh ða strongan lyft stormum abeatne.

> Then shall the Sun, all dusky turned, be changed
> To hue of blood, that once so brightly shone
> Above the Ere-world for the bairns of men:
> So too the Moon that erst herself by night
> Lighted mankind, precipitately falls,
> Likewise the stars from heaven hurtle down,
> Through the strong Lift lashed to and fro by storms.

It is expanded, no doubt; but it is English, not Latin.

Moreover, it is worth while to compare Gregory's phrase, "Quis enim solis nomine nisi Dominus, et quae lunae nomine nisi ecclesia designatur?" with Cynewulf's expansion of it into a simile which I have given in the note on p. 399. How much tenderness, how much delight, in the nature of the sun and moon themselves is added to the Latin! The prose has become soft poetry. The passage which concerns the leaps of Christ may also be compared. It is said that the words, "Quamvis adhuc rerum perturbationibus animus fluctuet, jam tamen spei vestrae anchoram in aeternam patriam figite," is the source of the sea-simile beginning —

> Nu is þon gelicost swa we on lagu-flode,

which is translated at p. 400; but, if so, what a change; what an illustration it is of what a poet can do with a well-worn thought! How little of the Latin convention is in it, how much of Northumbrian individuality and of Cynewulf's distinctive feeling! See, too, all that he has added in his working up (p. 403) of the passage in the Homily *in Die Epiphaniae* about the sorrow of the universe at the death of Jesus.

C. — (CHAPTER XXIV)

LATIN SOURCES OF THE "CHRIST"

(Cf. *passus secundus*)

Homilia in Ascensio ne Domini

§ 9. Hoc autem nobis primum quaerendum est, quidnam fit quod nato Domino apparuerunt Angeli, et tamen non leguntur in albis vestibus apparuisse: ascendente autem Domino missi Angeli in albis leguntur

Alba veste laetit indic

ct i. 9. vestibus apparuisse. Sic etenim scriptum est: *Videntibus illis elevatus est, et nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum. Cumque intuerentur in coelum euntem illum, ecce duo viri steterunt juxta illos in vestibus albis.* In albis autem vestibus gaudium et solemnitas mentis ostenditur. Quid est ergo quod nato Domino, non in albis vestibus; ascendente autem Domino, in albis vestibus Angeli apparent: nisi quod tunc magna solemnitas Angelis facta est, cum coelum Deus homo penetravit? Quia nascente Domino videbatur divinitas humiliata: ascendente vero Domino, est humanitas exaltata. Albae etenim vestes exaltationi magis congruunt quam humiliationi. In assumtione ergo ejus Angeli in albis vestibus videri debuerunt: quia qui in nativitate sua apparuit Deus humilis, in Ascensione sua ostensus est homo sublimis.

scen- § 10. Sed hoc nobis magnopere, fratres carissimi, in hac solemnitate
li quid pensandum est: quia deletum est hodierna die chirographum damna-
iamus. tionis nostrae, mutata est sententia corruptionis nostrae. Illa enim natura
iii. 19. cui dictum est: *Terra es, et in terram ibis,* hodie in coelum ivit. Pro hac ipsa namque carnis nostrae sublevatione per figuram beatus Job Dominum avem vocat. Quia enim Ascensionis ejus mysterium Judaeam non intelligere conspexit, de infidelitate ejus sententiam protulit, dicens:
xviii. 7. *Semitam ignoravit avis.* Avis enim recte appellatus est Dominus; quia corpus carneum ad aethera libravit. Cujus avis semitam ignoravit quisquis eum ad coelum ascendisse non credidit. De hac solemnitate per
viii. 2. Psalmistam dicitur: *Elevata est magnificentia tua super coelos.* De hac
xlvi. 6. rursus ait: *Ascendit Deus in jubilatione, et Dominus in voce tubae.* De
lxvii. hac iterum dicit: *Ascendens in altum, captivam duxit captivitatem, dedit dona hominibus.* Ascendens quippe in altum, captivam duxit captivitatem: quia corruptionem nostram virtute suae incorruptionis absorbuit.
. xii. 8. Dedit vero dona hominibus; quia misso desuper Spiritu, alii sermonem sapientiae, alii sermonem scientiae, alii gratiam virtutum, alii gratiam curationum, alii genera linguarum, alii interpretationem tribuit sermonum. Dedit ergo dona hominibus. De hac Ascensionis ejus gloria etiam Habac. iii. cuc ait: *Elevatus est sol, luna stetit in ordine suo.* Quis enim solis nomine nisi Dominus, et quae lunae nomine nisi ecclesia designatur? Quousque enim Dominus ascendit ad coelos, sancta ejus Ecclesia adversa mundi omnimodo formidavit: at postquam ejus Ascensione roborata est, aperte praedicavit, quod occulte credidit. Elevatus est ergo sol, et luna stetit in ordine suo: quia cum Dominus coelum petiit, sancta ejus Ecclesia in auctoritate praedicationis excrevit. Hinc ejusdem Ecclesiae voce
.t. ii. 8. per Salomonem dicitur: *Ecce iste venit saliens in montibus, et transiliens colles.* Consideravit namque tantorum operum culmina, et ait: *Ecce iste venit saliens in montibus.* Veniendo quippe ad redemtionem nostram, quosdam, ut ita dixerim, saltus dedit. Vultis, fratres carissimi, ipsos ejus saltus agnoscere? De coelo venit in uterum, de utero venit in praesepe, de praesepe venit in crucem, de cruce venit in sepulcrum, de sepulcro rediit in coelum. Ecce ut nos post se currere faceret, quosdam
xvii. 6. pro nobis saltus manifestata per carnem veritas dedit: quia *exultavit ut*
i. 3. *gigas ad currendum viam suam,* ut nos ei diceremus ex corde: *Trahe nos post te, curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.*

inum § 11. Unde, fratres carissimi, oportet ut illuc sequamur corde, ubi
den- eum corpore ascendisse credimus. Desideria terrena fugiamus, nihil nos
n jam delectet in infimis, qui patrem habemus in coelis. Et hoc nobis est
m magnopere perpendendum: quia is qui placidus ascendit, terribilis redi-
fes- bit: et quidquid nobis cum mansuetudine praecepit, hoc a nobis cum dis-
ius.

trictione exiget. Nemo ergo indulta poenitentiae tempora parvipendat; nemo curam sui, dum valet, agere negligat: quia Redemtor noster tanto tunc in judicium districtior veniet, quanto nobis ante judicium magnam patientiam praerogavit. Haec itaque vobiscum, fratres, agite: haec in mente sedula cogitatione versate. Quamvis adhuc rerum perturbationibus animus fluctuet: jam tamen spei vestrae anchoram in aeternam patriam figite, intentionem mentis in vera luce solidate. Ecce ad coelum ascendisse Dominum audivimus. Hoc ergo servemus in meditatione, quod credimus. Et si adhuc hic tenemur infirmitate corporis, sequamur tamen eum passibus amoris. Non autem deserit desiderium nostrum ipse qui dedit, Jesus Christus Dominus noster, qui vivit et regnat cum Deo Patre in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia secula seculorum. Amen.

[Sancti Gregorii Magni xl. Homiliarum in Evangelia Lib. ii., Homil. xxix.]

HYMNUS DE DIE IUDICII

(Cf. *passus tertius*)

Apparebit repentina dies magna domini,
Fur obscura velut nocte improvisos occupans.

Brevis totus tum parebit prisci luxus saeculi,
Totum simul cum clarebit praeterisse saeculum.

Clangor tubae per quaternas terrae plagas concinens,
Vivos una mortuosque Christo ciet obviam.

De coelesti iudex arce, maiestate fulgidus,
Claris angelorum choris comitatus aderit:

Erubescet orbis lunae, sol et obscurabitur,
Stellae cadent pallescentes, mundi tremet ambitus.

Flamma, ignis anteibit iusti vultum iudicis,
Coelos, terras et profundi fluctus ponti decorans.

Gloriosus in sublimi rex sedebit solio,
Angelorum tremebunda circumstabunt agmina.

Huius omnes ad electi colligentur dexteram,
Pravi pavent a sinistris hoedi velut foetidi:

Ite, dixit rex ad dextros, regnum coeli sumite,
Pater vobis quod paravit ante omne saeculum;

Karitate qui fraterna me iuvistis pauperem,
Karitatis nunc mercedem reportate divites.

Laeti dicent: quando, Christe, pauperem te vidimus,
Te, rex magne, vel egentem miserati iuvimus?

Magnus illis dicet iudex: cum iuvistis pauperes,
Panem, domum, vestem dantes, me iuvistis humiles.

Nec tardabit et sinistris loqui iustus arbiter:
In gehennae maledicti flammas hinc discedite;

Obsecrantem me audire despexistis mendicum,
Nudo vestem non dedistis, neglexistis languidum.

Peccatores dicent: Christe, quando te vel pauperem,
Te, rex magne, vel infirmum contemnentes sprevimus?

Quibus contra iudex altus: mendicanti quamdiu
Opem ferre despexistis, me sprevistis improbi.

Retro ruent tum iniusti ignes in perpetuos,
Vermis quorum non morietur, flamma nec restinguitur.

Satan atro cum ministris quo tenetur carcere,
Fletus ubi mugitusque, strident omnes dentibus.

Tunc fideles ad coelestem sustollentur patriam,
Choros inter angelorum regni petent gaudia,

Urbis summae Hirusalem introibunt gloriam
Vera lucis atque pacis in qua fulget visio.

Xpm. regem iam paterna claritate splendidum
Ubi celsa beatorum contemplantur agmina. —

Ydri fraudes ergo cave, infirmentes subleva,
Aurum temne, fuge luxus si vis astra petere.

Zona clara castitatis lumbos nunc praecingere,
In occursum magni regis fer ardentes lampades.

HOMILIA IN DIE EPIPHANIAE

(Cf. ll. 1126–1190)

§ 2. Omnia quippe elementa auctorem suum venisse testata sunt. Ut enim de eis quiddam usu humano loquar: Deum hunc coeli esse cognoverunt, quia sub plantis ejus se calcabile praebuit. Terra cognovit, quia eo moriente contremuit. Sol cognovit, quia lucis suae radios abscondit. Saxa et parietes cognoverunt, quia tempore mortis ejus scissa sunt. Infernus agnovit, quia hos quos tenebat mortuos reddidit. Et tamen hunc, quem Dominum omnia insensibilia elementa senserunt, adhuc infidelium Judaeorum corda Deum esse minime cognoscunt, et, duriora saxis, scindi ad poenitendum nolunt: eumque confiteri abnegant, quem elementa, ut diximus, aut signis aut scissionibus Deum clamabant.

(In Evang. Lib. 1. Homilia x.)

D. — (CHAPTERS XXIII, XXV)

THE "FATES OF THE APOSTLES" AND THE "ANDREAS"

I have treated in the text of the *Fates of the Apostles* as a separate poem, signed by Cynewulf, and I have assigned the *Andreas* to another poet than Cynewulf. I did not dwell on the critical reasons for depriving Cynewulf of the *Andreas*. The reasons I assigned were literary, and I think they had some weight. Since then, Mr. Gollancz's book on the *Christ* has appeared, and he makes, in his *Excursus on the Cynewulf-runes*, a suggestion with regard to both the *Fates of the Apostles* and the *Andreas* which is well worth consideration. The *Fates of the Apostles* is a short, abrupt poem of about a hundred lines, in which the work and death of the Twelve Apostles are, as it were, catalogued; about eight lines being assigned to each. The poem is as marrowless as a bleached bone. Not a trace of Cynewulf's tenderness or imagination is to be found in it, till we come to the personal statement at the end.

Mr. Gollancz, reading the poem with the newly-discovered runes of Cynewulf's name, thought that it was scarcely worth while to add to so short and lifeless a poem an elaborate epilogue containing the poet's signature; and has been led to the conjecture which I give now in his own words —

"The *Fates of the Apostles* consists of little more than a hundred lines: it is certainly no very meritorious piece of work, and it seems strange that the poet should have been so anxious to attest his authorship thereof by a long runic passage. In the MS. the poem immediately follows the *Legend of Andreas*, and I am more and more inclined to regard it as a mere epilogue to this more ambitious epic, standing in exactly the same relationship therefore to it that the tenth passus of *Elene* does to the whole poem. Its relationship is perhaps even closer, for whereas the ninth passus of *Elene* ends with "finit," there is no such ending of the poem in the case of *Andreas*. At the present moment I can see nothing that militates against this view of the Cynewulfian authorship of this latter poem, and further investigation will enable us, I think, to claim that Cynewulf inserted his name in his four most important works — the epics on *Christ*, *Elene*, *Juliana*, and *Andreas*."

This is a very interesting suggestion, and I would gladly subscribe to it, but its very pleasantness makes me feel that it needs further evidence than we have at present. When I first read the *Andreas* some years ago along with the *Elene*, I was nearly certain it was by Cynewulf, but I was as nearly certain that the *Seafarer* and the *Wanderer* were also by him. But as time went on I gave up his authorship of the *Wanderer*. Then I surrendered the *Seafarer*, but I was not so sure of this surrender as I was of that of the *Wanderer;* and if Mr. Gollancz be hereafter proved to be right in his belief that the *Andreas* is Cynewulf's, I think we shall also have to give the *Seafarer* to Cynewulf. Then I finally, but with great reluctance, gave up the *Andreas*, and allotted it to some unknown poet who was a scholar or friend of Cynewulf, and now Mr. Gollancz asks me to restore it again to Cynewulf. It would be a real pleasure if I could get sufficient evidence for this. I am fond of Cynewulf's nature, character, and work, and he would stand out much more clearly and be a more various and greater poet if he wrote the *Andreas;* for the poem is quite different from his other works, more gay, more outward, more the work of a man of the world, more concise and clear in description both of events and of the natural world. It was the presence of this outwardness and the absence of any inward personal cry in the poem which especially led me to doubt that Cynewulf had written the poem. This literary argument would cease to have weight if it could be proved that the *Fates of the Apostles* was the epilogue of the poem, because the personal cry would then be added to the *Andreas*. Then, too, all the sea-passages in the *Andreas* would be in harmony with the known passion of Cynewulf for the sea. Other things also, such as the resemblances in the *Andreas* to the *Elene* and to some of the *Riddles*, would fall into a better order. Moreover, those who deny the *Andreas* to Cynewulf are forced to invent an imitator of Cynewulf who was as good a poet as himself; and the invention of an imitator, when we have a known poet at hand to whom we may with much probability allot a poem, is always a harsh proceeding; to say nothing of the argument — also of some weight — that the imitator must have been contemporary with Cynewulf, for with the Danes threatening Northumbria, poetry was not likely to have been written after Cynewulf's death. Now fine imitators are generally of a new generation, not of the same time in which the imitated poet is writing.

But when all this has been said, it must be confessed that the view that the *Fates of the Apostles* is the epilogue of the *Andreas*, and, therefore, that the *Andreas* is Cynewulf's, is at present a happy suggestion and no more. It is really just as probable that Cynewulf should write his name in runes at the end of a short poem like the *Fates of the Apostles* as that he should write it at the end of a long one like the *Elene*. That the *Fates of the Apostles* follows the *Andreas* in the MS. of the Vercelli Book does supply a probability that it may have been the epilogue of the *Andreas*, provided some confirmatory evidence is brought of this from some other quarter. But without such evidence, the probability of the *Fates of the Apostles* being a separate poem is at present the stronger. It is said by Mr. Gollancz that before the epilogue in the *Elene* the word *Finit* stands, but that there is no *Finit* after the *Andreas*. The relationship to the *Andreas* of the *Fates of the Apostles* may then, he thinks, be even closer than the relationship of the epilogue of the *Elene* to the *Elene*. This proves too much. Moreover, the *Fates of the Apostles* begins with

the usual beginning of a separate poem, with the word *Hwaet* — which was, so to speak, the call of the poet, accompanied by a sharp twang of the harp-strings, to the audience to be silent and to listen to him. This beginning more than balances any argument derived from the absence of *Finit* at the end of the *Andreas* and before the *Fates of the Apostles*.

In the epilogue to the *Elene* there is a plain reference to the rest of the poem which precedes it. "*Thus*," Cynewulf says, "I wove within myself Wordcraft, and gave voice to my thought." In the *Fates of the Apostles* there is no reference in the first lines to the *Andreas*. The beginning — "So, sad of mood, I found this song," might be such a reference, were it not that it is followed by words which look forward to the poem which ensues, not to any poem which has gone before. "In my sick soul from far and wide I collected in what ways the Æthelings made proof of their courage" — and the Æthelings are the twelve Apostles. Moreover, when he comes to Andrew among the rest, there is no allusion whatever to him as the subject of the poem to which this *Fates of the Apostles* is supposed to be the epilogue. We might say that if it were really the epilogue of the *Andreas*, this silence would scarcely have been maintained. It is true that the beginning of the *Andreas*, in its use of heroic terms, much resembles the poet's usage in the *Fates of the Apostles;* and, moreover, there is in both the *Andreas* and the *Fates* a sparse and pale imitation of parts of *Beowulf*, but then likenesses have little weight. On the whole, though I think it extremely likely that the *Andreas* is by Cynewulf, we have as yet no evidence for that opinion.

E. — (CHAPTER XXIII)

THE RUNIC PASSAGES IN CYNEWULF'S POEMS

A. — *Christ* (796–806)

þonne · C · cwaca ð gehyre ð cyning mae ð lan
rodera ryhtend sprecan re þe word
þam þe him aer in worulde wace hyrdon
þendan · Y · and · N · y þast meahtan
frofre findan · þaer sceal forht monig
on þam wong-stede werig bidan
hwaet him aefter daedum deman wille
wra þra wita · Bi þ se · W· scaecen
eor þan fraetwa · U · was longe
· L · flodum bilocen lif-wynna dael
· F · on foldan þonne fraetwe sculon
byrnan on baele.

B. — *Elene* (1257–1271)

A waes saecc o ð ðaet
cnyssed cearwelmum · C · drusende
þeah he in medohealle ma ðmas þege
aeplede gold · Y · gnornode
· N · gefera nearusorge dreah
enge rune þaer him · E · fore
milpa ðas maet modig þraegde

wirum gewlenced · W · is geswiðrad
gomen aefter gearum geogoð is gecyrred
ald onmedla · U · waes geara
geogoðhades glaem nu synt geardagas
aefter fyrstmearce forð gewitene
lifwynne geliden swa · L · toglideð
flodas gefysde · F · aeghwam bið
laene under lyfte landes fraetwe
gewitaþ under wolcnum winde geliccost.

C. — *Fata Apostolorum* (96–106)

Her maeg findan foreþances gleaw
se ðe hine lysleð leoðgiddunga
hwa þas fitte fegde · F · þaer on ende standeð
eorlas þaes on eorðan br[u]caþ ne moton hie awa aetsomne
woruldwunigende · W · sceal gedreosan
· U · on eðle aefter to-h[reosan]
laene lices fraetewa efne swa · L · toglideð
[þonne] · C · [and · Y ·] craeftes neosað
nihtes nearowe on him [· N · ligeð]
[cy]ninges þeodom, nu ðu cunnan miht
hwa on þaem wordum waes werum oncyðig.

D. — *Juliana* (704–711)

Geomor hweorfeð
· C · Y· and · N · cyning biþ reþe
sigora syllend þonne synnum fah
· E · W· and · U · acle bidað
hwaet him aefter daedum deman wille
lifes to leane · L · F · beofað
seomað sorgcearig sar eal genom
synna wunde þe ic sið oððe aer
geworhte in worulde.

F. — (CHAPTER XXV)

GNOMIC VERSES

Cotton MS.

1. He, the King, shall hold the kingdom. Cities shall afar be seen;
Those that are upon this earth — artful work of giants,
Wondrous work of Wall-stones! Wind in air is swiftest,
Thunder on its path the loudest. Mighty are the powers of Christ!
Wyrd is strongest! Winter coldest,
Most hoar-frosts has Spring, he is cold the longest!
Summer is sun-loveliest; then the sky is hottest!
Autumn above all is glorious; unto men it brings
All the graining of the year God doth send to them.

13. Woe is wonderfully clinging. Onward wend the clouds;
Valiant comrades ever shall their youthful Ætheling
Bolden to the battle and the bracelet-giving!
Courage in the earl, edge shall on the helm
Bide the battle through! On the cliff the hawk,
Wild, shall won at home. In the wood the wolf,
Wretched one, apart shall dwell; in the holt the boar,
Strong with strength of teeth abides.

50. Good shall with evil, youth shall with eld,
Life shall with death, light shall with darkness,
Army with army, one foe with another,
Wrong against wrong — strive o'er the land,
Fight out their feud; and the wise man shall ever
Think on the strife of the world.

Exeter MS. B.

1. Frost shall freeze; fire melt wood,
Earth shall be growing, ice make a bridge,
The Water-helm bear, lock wondrously up
The seedlings of earth. One shall unbind
The fetters of frost — God the Almighty.
Winter shall pass, fair weather return;
Summer is sun-hot, the sea is unstill.
The dead depth of ocean for ever is dark.[1]

82. A king shall with cattle, with armlets and beakers,
Purchase his Queen; and both, from the first,
With their gifts shall be free. The spirit of battle
Shall grow in the man, but the woman shall thrive,
Beloved, mid her folk; shall light-hearted live,
Counsel shall keep, shall large-hearted be!
With horses and treasure, and at giving of mead,
Everywhere, always — she shall earliest greet
The prince of the nobles, before his companions.
To the hand of her lord, the first cup of all
Straightway she shall give; and they both shall take rede,
House-owners, together.

126. Gold is befitting upon a man's sword;
Good victory-gear! Gems on a Queen;
A good scôp for men; for warriors the war-dart
To hold in the fight the defences of home!
A shield for the striver, a shaft for the thief,
A ring for the bride, a book for the learner,
For holy men Housel, and sins for the heathen.

These are enough to show the type. Many others, worth insertion, are already used throughout this volume.

[1] "The dead deep wave is longest dark." The above is, I think, the meaning of this much disputed line.

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